



messing about in **BOATS**

Special Features This Issue
"Blackburn 2005" - "Oxford Paper Boat Races"
"Three Boating Adventures" - "Building Mayfly 16"

Volume 23 - Number 9

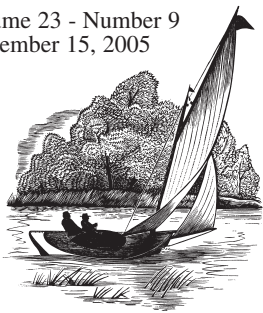
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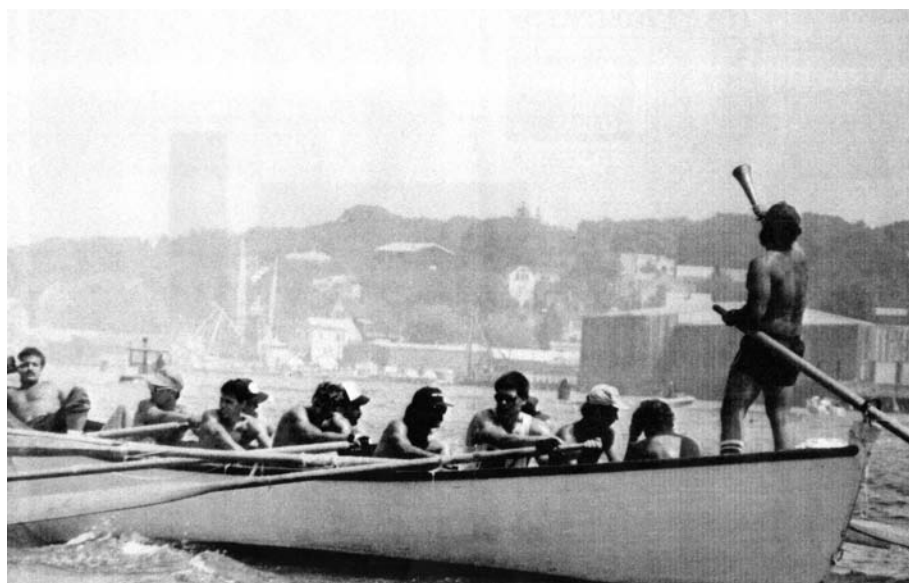
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Commentary...

Bob Hicks, Editor



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On the Cover...

The Banks dory which topped its class in the Blackburn Challenge this year rests on the beach afterwards, a relic of a bygone era kept alive by a dedicated team of oarsmen. Kinley Gregg's report on the event is featured in this issue.

This photo is my favorite view of the Blackburn Challenge rowing/paddling race around Cape Ann on the Massachusetts North Shore. I took it from a "press boat" in 1988, the second year of the Blackburn. I captioned it, "The helmsman of the seine boat *Pinta* of the St. Peters Club announcing its imminent arrival at the finish line." At the time it captured the essence of the event for me, 20+ miles of rowing competition on open ocean for a variety of pulling boats, with the big multi-oared boats a dramatic presence. They're all gone now 17 years later.

I missed the Blackburn Challenge this year as Jane and I were in Ohio at a "once in a lifetime" reunion involving people from my motorcycling days of the '60s and '70s. As it would never happen again in the years I'm likely to have left, we opted for nostalgia.

Thanks to Kinley Gregg, who has competed in the Blackburn for many years rowing ocean shells but this year tried a surf ski, we have a report for you. Kinley observes that the Blackburn today is all about paddling in kayaks. While rowing craft continue to take part, they have been swamped by a fleet of kayaks. The only multi-oared craft to appear was Gloucester's own *Siren Song*, which took part, with an all women crew, in the 1988 event. *Siren Song* this year was pitted against a sliding seat four, a hopeless mis-match.

The first Blackburn in 1987 ran afoul of the tag end of a three day northeast storm that was not done with piling up the seas off Cape Ann, so the race was unable to go the full dis-

tance, having to settle instead for an out and back course on the lee side of the cape. Taking part in that event was just one kayak, a down river model which finished fifth overall, nine minutes behind the overall winner. This year 114 kayaks of all classes took part, none of them down river models. In 1987 a Little River sliding seat double was the overall winner. This year a Maas sliding seat double set a new course record of 2:19:27 despite the onslaught in recent years of the big Hawaiian outrigger canoes.

Howard Blackburn was an oarsman, his fame came from his survival, during the days of Gloucester's great fishing schooner fleet, on winter seas off Nova Scotia in a Banks dory when he lost touch with his schooner and rowed hundreds of miles to shore with a dead dorymate, his hands frozen to the oars. He was a born promoter and capitalized on his fame by opening up his famous Blackburn Tavern and going on to more adventures, like crossing the Atlantic solo in an 18' sailboat. Hard to say what Howard would think of today's event named after him. Perhaps he might not view his name being attached to what would have to be to him an effete exercise in frivolity with much enthusiasm.

The only boats entered into today's race named for him that likely would be recognizable to Howard are the handful of Banks dories. With that thought in mind I chose Kinley's photo of a Banks dory for the cover. I suppose were Howard Blackburn to pick up a copy of this issue it might pique his curiosity, wondering what in the world that Banks dory was doing there on a beach!

We were experiencing record high heat across the country, forests out west were burning, people in Phoenix, Arizona, were dying in the dozens, the East Coast was under a heat advisory, so we headed out to sea seeking relief. This was the fifth trip out on home waters in our Melonseed Marshmelon this season. The tide was low at 11:30am, so the bar would be open, a good destination.

As most people find coming off a week's work, it is hard to slow down and reset the mind into "day-off-mode." I managed to find enough things that needed my attention before getting away, which made for a late departure. Last season this would not have been a big deal as the bar was taller and broader.

This past winter the storms carved new channels and redistributed the spoils from Sandy Point Reservation at the south tip of Plum Island. There are now two new sandbars off the coast, long, lean, mini Sable Islands, waiting to snag unwary boaters. These bars are long and rather low so don't attract Bar Bums, like the one off the front of Crane's Beach. Due to the winter storms, this favorite bar is now a shadow of its former bulk. It can't stand up as long to the incoming tide and our seating area is much reduced, even at full low tide.

Once we were underway, the relief of being on the water was immediate, the breeze picked up the coolth from a still chilly ocean and spread it like a balm over our skin. The occasional slap of a wave onto bare skin was almost too cold in the aggressive breeze. As the little boat leaped exuberantly forward, I moved a cushion into position that was "just right" to deflect the splashes. Sun, breeze, and cool water, the unspoken comment, "it just doesn't get any better," was behind the look in the Captain's eyes.

Heading out toward the bar we sailed past still exposed clam flats. The air above them was redolent with the simmering offal left from fishermen and baking clumps of mussels. An aging Saint Bernard dog has better smelling breath than those flats exuded. There will be a few less clams to exhale their sulfurous fumes now that the Red Tide ban has been lifted.

In fairness, it's not the clams themselves that are smelling, but the layers of organic compounds that have been undergoing anaerobic decay over the years. The shifting sands bury material in layers. Shut off from the normal oxygenated composting process, the compounds are trapped and then released when disturbed by a clammer's fork or the hundreds of clam siphons that extrude up through the muck, letting the fumes escape. "Clam Farts" we called the stench as children playing on the flats.

Once past the flats and into the navigation channel, we flew south, the boat emitting a cheerful chuckle along her sleek skeg and around her wineglass stern. The hydraulics of the boat make her a vociferous vessel. She has a contented cat's purr as water swishes along the centerboard, the satisfied hiss of a passionate lover when heeled over and going like a bat on a broad reach. No matter what point of sail we are on, when she's moving forward at a nice clip she'll add her happy chuckles to the conversation on deck. I could make my "next million" if I recorded these sounds and sold copies to the Enviro-Muzak distributors.

The Captain had to choose between



Window on the Water

By Chris Kaiser

A Tenacious Tree

going too far out to avoid the current and wind shadow of Steep Hill, or riding the currents close to shore, knowing we might lose the breeze. Yesterday he chose to stay further out, but not as far as the new razor-backed bars off Sandy Point. This left us with lots of room to avoid the bars and keep out of the incoming current as we moved in the opposite direction, it also avoided Steep Hill's affecting the wind. We may even have gotten a nice lift from the wind as it tumbled over the hill and hit the surface right about where we were.

By now, I had to abandon the cushion and move up onto the windward coaming to keep the boat balanced as we dashed down the Sound. Returning power boats churned past us, all hands turning a wistful gaze on the little boat scampering through the counter-current waves. We arrived at the Bar to find it a sliver of still dry sand. Three other families were in residence. A pair of King Charles Spaniels romped with a huge chocolate Labrador. A young boy boogie boarding completed the perfect picture of "A Summer's Day." A third couple was involved with catching the returning stripers in the deep channel between the Crane's mainland and the rapidly disappearing bar.

We hauled the boat up the increasingly inundated sand three times, and on the fourth time we exited the bar from the southern edge and sailed away just as the last grain of sand disappeared. Dogs and boy maintained the rights of having closed that bar, standing on the highest lump of sand until the waves washed around their ankles.

Running southeast for a bit we enjoyed the sights and sounds of unimpeded ocean waves, then tacked toward home. It was just too nice to call it quits, so we decided to check out the driftwood shack someone has built on Sandy Point. Maneuvering into the lagoon between the new and old sand spits was fun. A couple of motor boats recognized their limitations and turned away before running aground. One seriously overloaded Lund metal skiff was haring about, looking like the driver's thought process was, "if I just go faster, we can get over the shallow spots." They turned foamy donuts and ran at the submerged sand spit several times, each time coming closer to grief yet heeding someone's high pitched scream of "Turn!" Finally they gave up and roared away toward

the back side of Steep Hill Beach.

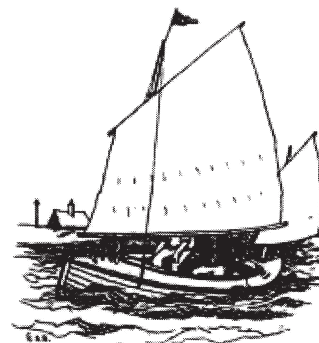
Entering the placid area in front of the shack, we couldn't get too close to shore as there were dozens of fishermen's lines in the water. I got a good look and we set off around the corner, heading slowly back toward home. Before going across the Sound we stopped by the massive tree that was washed up on the shore two years ago. This past fall and winter we experienced some of the most powerful storms in decades. The tree was washed even farther up the wrack-line with each successive storm.

Viewing it from my window I was sure it was a spruce tree, so thick and heavy was its foliage, then as the leaves were blown off of it I was convinced it was a maple. We never got over to that shore last summer so I was left to wonder what kind of tree it was. I wanted to know and the Captain wasn't ready to return so we hauled out a bit below the twisted carcass. Re-applying the green-head deterrent, I hiked up over a dune to check out the skeleton. Avoiding glossy, angry clumps of poison ivy, I went about checking out the bark and roots of the hulk. It was a puzzle, it looked familiar, but I'd never seen this bark on a tree before, only on a shrub.

The twisted root ball indicated that in the past the tree had fallen over and then set down new roots to keep living. Finally, I reached the top branches and was startled to find clumps of what I mistook as poison ivy growing like air plants on several thick branches. One clump was sufficiently well developed so I could positively identify what my brain had earlier dismissed as "impossible." This was a sumac, one of enormous proportions, but a sumac nonetheless. The Captain came over and agreed, he also vetoed my thought of taking a cutting and letting this tenacious tree live again from its scion. "It's a weed, and one you've expended a lot of energy on to eradicate from our properties."

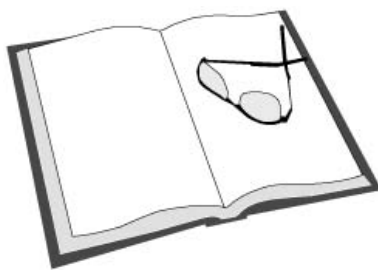
Even as a sworn enemy to the sumac genus, I was impressed by its tenacity. To have had the vitality to re-sprout after two years on a salty sand dune with no living roots was both amazing, then, on later reflection, daunting. My pulling up baby sumacs and cutting down adult ones means nothing in the long run, when I'm no longer there they'll re-sprout and take over the gardens.

Arriving home, I went inside to start dinner. Passing the Window on the Water and the computer, I felt a twinge of guilt. I hadn't written my daily dozen for a few days, work and sailing had distracted me from my avocation. Perhaps seeing the washed ashore sumac was just the prod I needed to re-start my routine. If a dead tree can keep sprouting, then perhaps so can a distracted essayist.



Do you know *The Mariner's Book of Days* Peter puts out every year? In case you don't, it is a calendar book absolutely filled with nautical tidbits of varying degrees of importance and entertainment value. The calendar aspect of it is the only continuous or organized part. That fact makes it ideal reading matter for intermittent use. I won't mention any of the possible places to leave it but anyplace where someone might want to read a little while and then put the book down without worrying about losing his place would be ideal... particularly if the door to that place is usually closed so a little chuckle or possible guffaw from time to time won't disturb the rest of the household.

Anyway, this book is about like *The Mariner's Book of Days* except that, since it is not a calendar, Peter had more room (there are 289 pages) so some of the selections are longer. There are quotes from famous nautical books and nautical quotes from famous writers who most people don't think of as maritime people... and people I never heard of... some pretty stirring stuff:



Book Review

A Mariner's Miscellany

By Peter H. Spectre

Review by Robb White

The Clipper Ship

"Never, in these United States has the brain of man conceived, or the hand of man fashioned, so perfect a thing as the clipper ship. In her, the long suppressed artistic impulse of a practical, hard-working race burst into flower. The *Flying Cloud* was our Rheims, the *Lightning* our Amiens; but they were monuments carved from snow. For a brief moment of time they flashed their splendor around the world, then disappeared with the sudden completeness of the wild pigeon." (Samuel Eliot Morison)

The Coast Guard Cutter

"But the men that sail the ocean
In a wormy, rotten craft,
When the sea ahead is mountains
With a hell-blown gale abaft;
When the mainmast cracks and topples
And she's lurching in the trough,
Them's the guys that greets the cutter
With the smiles that won't come off."
(Arthur Somers Roche)

You know Spectre was in the Coast Guard when he was a young man.

There are also tidbits of wisdom which are not attributed to anybody and which I suspect might have flowed from the nib of the pen of Uncle Pete himself. In the section

"On Renaming the Boat" an anonymous person cautions us:

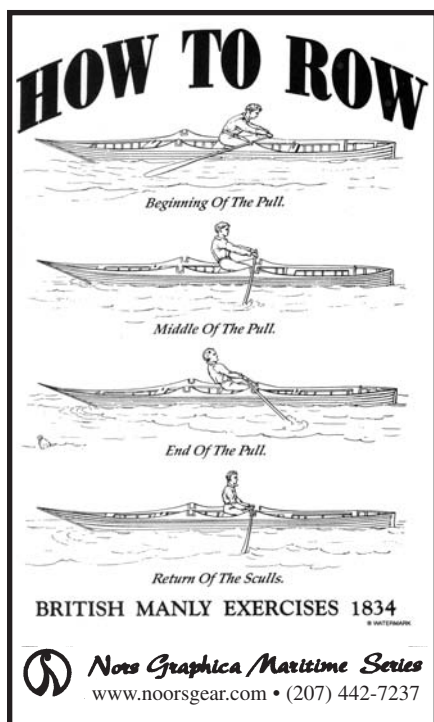
"Don't do it (bad luck will follow if you do), but if you must: Go heavy on the appeasement end of things." With that the advisor offers a bunch of suggestions about the rites and ceremonies to appease the spirits which will certainly visit the renamed vessel first chance they get: "Circle the boat twice, against the sun, or counterclockwise, to awaken the demons; then with the sun or clockwise to drive the demons away. If the boat is on land, circle her on foot, barefoot preferably; if not, wear sandals. If the boat is afloat, circle her by rowboat; oars or paddle only, as the gods and goddesses referred to above are offended by outboard motors."

It must be wonderful to have a publisher who will tolerate such literary gems as that, don't you think?

This is a very entertaining book and full of interesting facts and a flight of fancy which, like the above, is unusual in regular old stodgy maritime literature. But, due to the need for this thing to be acceptable to the young and possibly prissy, certain restraints were forced upon the publisher and editor and author by economic necessity. I, as a universal maritime language expert and historian, was able to detect a slight curbing of the tongue and even omissions of nautical lore that I would have insisted on including had I been the man in charge and had been able to follow my tendency of throwing economic necessities to the four winds in the interest of completeness and verbal accuracy.

For instance, though I read the book from cover to cover in the linear manner suggested by the author, I was unable to find the complete words to the song *Barnacle Bill the Sailor*, all 91 verses. I also noticed that in the section "Old Naval Slang" there was a downright error: U.S. Navy payday is not the day the eagle "screams" y'all. He might scream for officers but not for enlisted personnel. Not only that, but there was no mention of that favorite Navy enlisted man's breakfast "chipped beef on toast." There was no mention of the nickname for the aircraft carrier *USS Kearsarge*, upon which I briefly served, in the section "A Few Nicknames for Famous Ships" either.

I did learn some interesting facts though: The "rule of leeway under sail" says, "Wind on the starboard side, allow for leeway to port. Wind on the port side, allow for leeway to starboard." "The Chapman's Guide" couldn't have said that any better.



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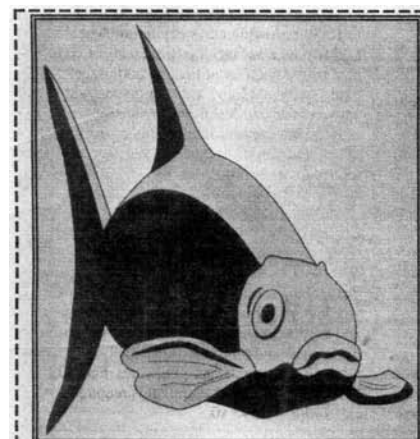
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It is delightful to read articles by highly trained naturalists who have accumulated years of experience observing nature. A boating enthusiast sent me a clipping of such an article from the March 8, 2005 *Baldwin Register* (Baldwin County, Alabama). Its title is, "Want to see nature at its best? Learn to blend in." The article begins:

"You see a hawk sitting contentedly on a wire as the traffic roars by at 60 miles per hour.

"You pull over onto the shoulder and get out of your car to take a picture of him. He immediately flies away. You've broken the rhythm. You've done something out of the ordinary.

"If you really want a picture of the hawk you can't talk. You can't open the door and slam it shut. You have to pull off the road slowly, leave the engine running, roll down the window, and quietly turn your body so you can take a photo through the open window."

The article's author is Sonya Wood Mahler, the Regional Extension Agent for Forestry, Wildlife, and Natural Resources covering eight counties in southwest Alabama. In the article Sonya goes on to discuss the right and wrong ways to observe wildlife. She uses the principle of "live and let live."

Sonya writes of a boat captain in Florida who used to ram his pontoon boat against a tree holding an osprey's nest. He did this so his passengers could get photos of the ospreys as they flew up off the nest. Certainly this goes against the "let live" principle and should be categorized as a bad thing to do. But I am sorry to say I've done nearly the same thing many times. About 40% of the Chesapeake Bay's aids-to-navigation have active osprey nests. As I approach one of these aids I hear the male bird start giving out warning calls. Then, when about 100 feet from the nest, the bird is forced into flight and circles the nest, crying loudly to scare the intruder away. I could have easily stayed far enough away from the nest so as not to upset the bird and his mate. Next time I'll know better and give these birds a wide berth.

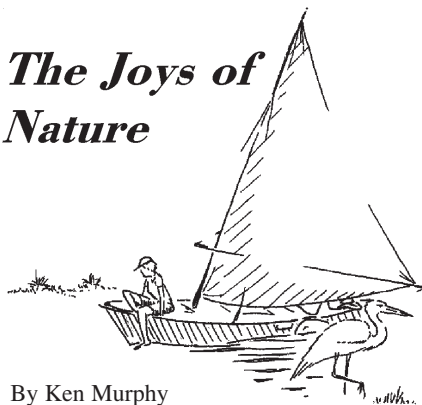
Each animal has its own "fright and flight" distance and you need to get to know what it is. Stand off and enjoy. Sonya suggests that you "buy a good pair of waterproof binoculars or a spotting scope and use these to view wildlife from a distance." She also suggests buying "a 400mm or greater lens for your 35mm camera and you will be able to get close-ups of an animal without it ever knowing you are there."

Sonya gives tips on how to approach wildlife without scaring it off, such as, "If you are paddling along a river and see a bird on the shore that you want to get a better look at, don't begin paddling straight towards it. This is a direct confrontation and few birds are tough enough to stand their ground. Instead, continue paddling slowly parallel with the bird.

"You want the animal to think you don't care anything about it. You can get a closer look to identify it or snap a picture of it as you continue past. It is best if you don't make eye contact with it. To animals, this is an aggressive stance that puts them on high alert.

"Remember, too, that the bird may be there when you come back up the river later in the day. You should note a landmark so

The Joys of Nature



By Ken Murphy

Be a Gentle Observer



you will know exactly where to look for the bird, and plan to be on the correct side of the river or have your camera ready."

Sonya frequently deals with alligators, so here are a few of her suggestions: "The only time I've seen alligators act aggressive-

ly toward boats is when the boater comes into an enclosed inlet or pool. Even then the alligator is merely bumping into the boat as it tries to move past through a narrow opening.

"If you paddle into backwater and find a large alligator living there, it is often a male 'gator that has claimed that corner as his own. Simply continue paddling slowly. I never head directly towards the alligator (a direct confrontation) and don't block the only entrance/exit in case he wants to swim past you and out into the open water.

"If an alligator is sunning on the shore when you come upon it, it will probably move back into the water where it feels safer. Obviously, you want to give it room to do this. Don't block it from reaching the water."

Sonya continues her article with an idea that boating club or even solo boaters should think about:

"The Mobile Bay Canoe & Kayak Club has a wonderful project called the Monet Paddles. Remember when Monet painted the same pond with its lily pads over and over during different times of the day, finding new light, new shadows, and new colors each time? Once a month for a year the club members paddle in the same area. This gives them the opportunity to see the wildlife and the plants and the character of that stretch of river as they change season to season.

"If you ask the participants they will tell you that they went to that same place 12 times, but that it was different and special each time."

Sonya ends the article with: "I enjoy the outdoors most when I have that special encounter with wildlife without disturbing them. And, of course, just my being there has disturbed them. I want to have the experience of being out there with them, but by being there I make the wilderness less wild. It is a delicate balance.

"When I cause a kingfisher to leave its perch and fly further down the river, I always give a little apology. But I also give a word of thanks for that blessing of having the opportunity to see something so rare and beautiful.

Sonya can be reached at: mahlesw@auburn.edu.

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Information of Interest...

Remembering Platt Monfort

When reading your memorial for Platt Monfort in a recent issue it reminded me of how lucky I was to have met Platt a few times and to have spoken to him on the phone while I was desperately trying to complete one of his 12-footers in my seventh floor New York apartment. He was the most invigorating individual I have ever met and so I feel a great loss as he was a man so full of life with unending curiosity about just about anything. He was special.

Al Bensusen, New York, NY

Pedal for the Planet Progress

The Pedal for the Planet expedition, now known as expedition360.com, has news. Steve Smith, who pedaled with Jason Lewis from the UK to Hawaii has published his book (see www.p2hi.com <http://www.p2hi.com>) and Jason is still underway having made it to Australia, crossed "Oz" by bike with a ragtag group, and is off in kayaks with a few others first to East Timor and now into Indonesia (see www.expedition360.com <http://www.expedition360.com>). Check out the *Indonesian Journal*, which has almost daily updates of their progress and adventures. Eventually they'll be back on bikes (if not already) and, after crossing to the mainland, will trek or bike, returning at some future date to the UK. As always there's a wish list for things they need should any readers like to check that out on the website and forward some expeditionary funding. Be a part of the last great first!

Nancy Sanford, St. Petersburg, FL

Information Wanted...

Woods Hole Spritsail Boat

I am in receipt of the material you kindly sent me regarding Sharon Brown's article on the *Roberta*, a Woods Hole Spritsail. Thank you indeed. It will reside in the archive for the book that I will leave with either the Woods Hole Historical Collection and Museum or the G.W. Blunt Library at Mystic Seaport.

On a research journey through centuries (1600 through 1900) and researching 11,404 references, I have traced the spritsail rig per se from very early (ca. 1600) Dutch/Danish small sailing craft to the ca. 1680-1780 spritsail of the English and French tall ships and work boats; especially the 1780-1930 style Thames spritsail barges of the U.K; and, finally in the "New World" the one and two mast spritsail work boats that arose in the Newfoundland, coastal Maine, and Cape Cod areas from whence it spread down the seacoast to the outer banks (Abelmarle and Pamlico Sounds) of North Carolina as the North Carolina Spritsail Skiff to right here in Durham, North Carolina, where a Carolina

spritsail small sailing craft is being commercially built even today (alas, from fiberglass). The spritsail also moved west with the Lewis and Clark Expedition as a spritsail pirogue and in the later days of the 1800s populated the California and Washington coastal areas as small sail craft workboats carrying a spritsail rig.

I have also traced the Woods Hole Spritsail, the object of my affection, from about 1780 to 1850 as it evolved from a heavier workboat version to the lighter racing version being commissioned in the 1850-1920 period. The great hurricane of 1938 about wiped them out except for a handful rediscovered in the 1950s. From the notable ones constructed between ca. 1880 and 1920, the Eddie Swift built three (*Spy*, *Susie*, Unnamed) and the N.G. Herrshoff built *Explorer* (nee *T.C.*) reside at Mystic Seaport (with one other in poor condition with no history that I can find).

I have, however, located four reproductions built in the last 33 years; the *Sandy Ford* by John Gardner (1972), the *Roberta* by Taylor and Snediker (1997), an incomplete Woods Hole Spritsail by David Martin (1998) in Woods Hole, Massachusetts, and the *Dewey* in Seattle, Washington (1998), built by the Center for Wooden Boats. I have a first refusal purchase contract on the *Roberta* and am building one on the lines of the Eddie Swift *Spy* here in my little shop currently. In 2006 there will be five of them on the water. Wouldn't it be a grand sight to see them all sailing once again in the waters of Woods Hole?

Is there any chance that that there might be an article in *MAIB* about the 1997 Wooden Boat Show when *Roberta* won the blue ribbon? I am searching for more of her history and my search of Mystic Seaport resources, both on-line and in person, failed to locate an article in *WoodenBoat* about the show and the *Roberta*.

I am looking for a source of back issues of *The Maine Coast Fisherman*, which has been long gone since the 1950s. John Gardner wrote two articles in that period that noted the Woods Hole Spritsail and attested to his itch to build one, an itch he finally scratched in 1972 with the *Sandy Ford* that still resides today at Mystic Seaport.

Dr. Michael E. McClure, 4 Ontario Ct., Durham, NC 27713

Designs...

Open Water Sculls

Quite a while back I wrote in looking for suggestions on open water sculls. (I am selling my Sea Pearl and moving over to a rowing boat so that I can make use of the early morning hours, as the afternoons in Great South Bay have been taken over by a class of people best avoided for the sake of both sanity and personal safety. But let's not dwell on that.)

I would first like to offer my thanks to those individuals who corresponded directly to me with their ideas. Thank you, Mr. Sayers and Dr. Lipton. I also thought I would fill everyone in on my decision now that I have made it.

I was looking for a hull that would serve primarily as a scull but which would also take a sailing rig for those instances when the opportunity for use might arise. But the main goal was to do some rowing. There were constraints. I do a lot of boating very early and very late into the season on relatively open stretches. I needed a boat that I could be confident of in dicey conditions and cold water. I wanted something that was completely self-bailing, unswampable (is that a word?), and easily re-boarded in the event of a capsize or knockdown. (I am all alone out there and have only the boat and myself to look to in the event of trouble.)

I searched for a long time and checked out quite a few boats in my quest. The Alden type boats were the first to drop out of the running. They call them open water rowboats but these boats didn't strike me as suitable for the Great South Bay. They were extraordinarily unstable (even the peapods), couldn't self bail, and would be absolute murder (likely impossible) to re-board if ever they were to go over.

I next checked out the VanDuyne-style lifeguard boats. These were everything the Aldens weren't. Stable and self-bailing surely. Unfortunately, they aren't really built for rowing. They are built primarily for getting back and forth across the surf line. High free-board meant that rowing them on open water in any sort of wind was going to be an exercise in frustration. Most everything else I looked into had similar issues. Every option was too stark a choice between performance and safety. In the back of my mind I was certain that somewhere out there was a boat that met the appropriate balance between the two, so I kept looking.

After about a year, I finally came across a product that appeared to hit the balance just right. After a test row I became convinced it's the right boat for my needs. It's a bizarre French-made roto-molded job called the Yole Club. The manufacturer is an outfit called Virus. Yes, Virus. Here's the link to the U.S. rep's website: <http://www.rowvirusboats.com/virus/yole.html>.



As you may notice from the photo, the "state-room" (apparently that's what they call the cockpit in a scull) is open at the stern and the floor is above the waterline so the boat is truly self-bailing. Sealed bilges and storage means that she can't swamp. The wide open stern means that in the event the skipper ends up in the drink the boat can be

re-boarded along its most stable axis. And, unlike the Aldens, the hull is wide and stable enough that I can get to the outriggers if a problem develops at that location. The outriggers can even be rotated inboard if I need to examine them up close. She has a low profile so she ought to row acceptably in head or cross winds.

Sure, she's ugly as sin and not even remotely traditional. And I'll never get a sailing rig on her, but that was always a secondary consideration. She's the best I have found for my needs after a very long search, so I am going for her. I haven't been on the water for over a year and I am ready to scream if I don't get out soon.

Mind you, they are ridiculously priced. Without the proceeds from the sale of my Sea Pearl, the purchase would have been out of the question. But between that and the \$1,500/year I am saving in dock fees I can justify it, at least to myself. Interested parties please note that the "Pearl" is still on the block. Ought to be up on eBay by the time this letter appears.

It's Sunday, August 7, as I write this. The Yole is being delivered to my house by a freight truck on Wednesday. I will write again to let everyone know if my opinion has changed at all once I get some time in.

Brian Salzano, Patchogue, NY

Traditional One Designs

There was a very nice picture of a Smith Boat Shop built El Toro class sailing dinghy, their most recent model, in your recent report on the John Gardner Small Craft Workshop. This boat can be righted by the skipper, with very little water remaining aboard, and sailed home.



A note on the flotation: I was teaching a sailing class when a friend came in sailing an El Toro with this cockpit configuration. He

pulled the boat out and opened the tanks (those white hatch covers) looking for some bit of equipment stored inside. I asked him to demonstrate its self-rescuing capabilities so he pushed the boat back into the water, leaned far over, and capsized it. Then he sat in the little expanse of the midships where the tanks do not quite meet. He and I were astonished to realize the boat floated so high that the open hatches shipped no water at all.

Wonder why the boat was not identified in the listing? The closest 8' prams don't fit. One is fiberglass and the other was bought in 1959. Smiths started building in the mid-1960s and did not come out with this configuration until around 1990.

It was also nice to see Chauncy Rucker's San Francisco Pelican in several of the photographs. From all accounts he did a fine job building his boat. The Pelican is an excellent all-round boat. It can be day sailed by four or more adults or camp-cruised by a family or a single-hander. It can be launched without wetting the trailer wheels, will ghost along with no perceptible air currents, or shoulder its way into more wind and wave than you really want to encounter.

It is disappointing that more of the traditional One-Design sailboats are not represented at these events. The El Toro, Penguin, OK Dinghy, San Francisco Pelican, Rhodes Bantam, Snipe, Windmill, Geary-18, and Lightning can be built from plans from class associations. By choosing one of these, the builder is assured the boat resulting from all his effort will actually sail well. And there is the added advantage of being able to pick up, at reasonable prices, necessary fittings and sails cast off in their prime by competitive sailors.

Jean Gosse, Shoreline, WA

Editor Comments: The boat pictured had no workshop registration number on it so we could not identify it. The published listing of boats entered was supplied by the Seaport, perhaps it was a last minute entry that did not make it onto the listing.

Likes Polynesian Designs

I enjoyed reading about the 10-meter Viking boat from the Roskilde Museum in Denmark in the July 1 issue. It looks like a Polynesian design that is used in building modern sea going catamarans. I really like the Polynesian design hulls, I plan to build one in 2006 if my health holds up until then.

I enjoyed Robb White, John Weiss' wooden boats down under, and Ann Rougle's cruise in *Hazel* in the Everglades. Ann was having fun while those mosquitoes were having a dinner party at which she was the guest of honor.

Bob Simon, State farm, VA

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This Magazine...

On the Shelf at CWB

I thought you might enjoy this photo of a bookshelf at the Seattle Center for Wooden Boats. Keep mine coming, I'm a long time subscriber.

Wayne Donelson, Ashburnham, MA



Provided Great Pleasure

I have been remiss in failing to let you and your staff know what a great pleasure your magazine has provided. I always look forward to its appearance in my mailbox. Your selection of material includes outstanding and interesting writers. Their work and ideas are original and it is great fun to mentally accompany them on their voyages. Their insight and solutions to small boat problems have been of real use to me in sailing and maintaining my own small boat. I owe you all my sincere thanks. Keep up your very good work.

Don Bergst, Folsom, CA

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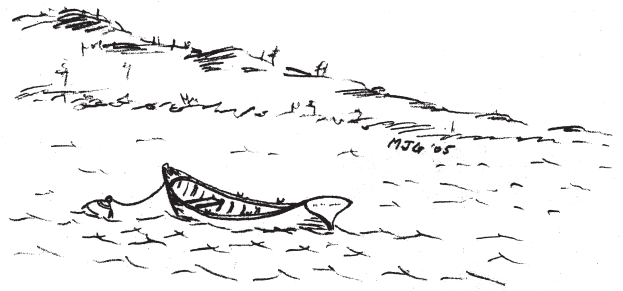
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From the Journals of Constant Waterman

By Matthew Goldman

It was a squeeze fitting me, Brother John, his wife Marla, and all our gear into my 13' Grumman. Not to mention Rudy. Rudy was their Doberman and was great in a canoe except when he wanted to take a walk, which was only every five minutes. We'd tied the canoe and him in the back of the truck and the three of us climbed up front. The truck smelled comfortingly of lunch and dog and red oak logs and coffee. Brother John, who isn't my brother, pushed aside his long hair and shifted gears. "Yep. We're gonna catch us some trout today. I sorta got that feelin'."

We launched the canoe by the ferry slip while Rudy the Dog got the kinks out after our two-mile drive by galloping round and round the parking area. John never bothered to lock his truck. Thirty years back, in a village as small as ours, nobody ever locked up. "Anyone steals my chain saw's got it comin'," said Brother John.

We paddled down river ten minutes, cut up the creek and were soon amid the marshes. It's tidal there and the trout don't like it much. We passed the deep hole where all you do is let down a worm to pull up a perch, a bullhead, or maybe a crappie. It's a good spot to know if you need a few fish for supper. Another half mile, the water ran clear and fresh, the bottom all sparkly gravel instead of mud. Here you catch nothing but brookies or maybe a perch. Wild brook trout are the Lord's own answer to flavor, there's nothing compares with a fresh one just out of the skillet.

I'd fished the stream back of our barn as a kid and you'd had to think as a brook trout before you could catch one. There'd been too much brush to consider casting flies. Then it was strictly a boy and a worm and a trout. It wasn't much different now. We each baited up while Rudy, employing a tried scientific method, determined that even a dozen worms were more than enough for breakfast. Marla wasn't squeamish at all when she baited her hook. I was in love with Marla and Brother John knew it. I never exceeded occasional brotherly hugs so we got on well.

I had tried very hard to fall in love with her sister out in Wisconsin and taken her paddling all the way to the cheese factory. The creek was slow without many riffles in it and our sole concern had been down in the lower hundred where two dozen heifers had capered into the shallow ford to greet us. "It's all right," she'd assured me. "They just want to play a bit." I'd felt the gravel grating against our bottom and had visions of two dozen Holsteins in my canoe. "Paddle!" I'd urged and we'd scooted amongst them and fled into deeper water. Later we nearly made love on a grassy bank but thought better of it. Her dad would have chopped me for silage to feed the bull, who needed a high protein diet for his line of work. Some day I'll tell you about that little canoe trip.

Now I watched Marla reel in a lovely trout and explain to Rudy how improved it would be by grilling and how much the hook would disagree with his nose. Rudy was one of those dogs who needs convincing. Besides, he felt he was being much ignored. He decided to take a little walk on the gunwale. A gigantic splash you could hear halfway to Christmas alerted us to the fact that the crew had jumped ship. We stowed our rods with a sigh. The trout would desert us, of course, they hadn't a notion of what allegiance demanded. Rudy was hanging onto the gunwale and thrashing. Our rail dipped under. We carefully paddled the few yards to shore and stood in the muck to hold the canoe so Rudy could bounce back in. He gratefully shared considerable water with us and spoiled our single trout by treading on it. But he fell out only once the whole way home. A good time was had by all.

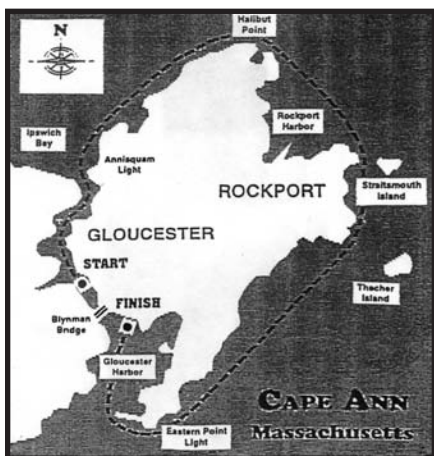


The winning Banks dory double rowed by Fenton Cunningham and Russell Atkinson in 3:51:33 with the famed greasy pole finish line in the background. The horizontal pole is greased up good for Gloucester's waterfront festival each summer and would-be heroes attempt to shinny to its outer end.

As a rower, I've always considered paddlers a rather vapid lot, prone to whining that if they don't know where they're heading, they don't want to go. But rarely does another woman show up at the Blackburn Challenge to row against me, and as I get older and fatter it becomes less and less rewarding to race against my previous times. So this year I joined the hoi polloi and picked up a paddle.

In the early '90s, when I started competing in Blackburn, much of the drama was in the multi-oar-with-cox class, 6-oared fixed seat gigs going head to head for 20 miles, a great spectacle culminating in winning times of less than three hours. But this year only one gig appeared, *Siren Song*, and its youthful crew was classed with a sliding seat four that, predictably, annihilated the traditional boat.

In the 21st century, Blackburn is about kayaks. Touring kayaks, racing kayaks, sit-on-top kayaks, if you like company, paddling is your pastime. Because the staggered start times send all back-facing boats off before any forward-facing boats begin, the better to avoid collisions, a sliding seat rower who can keep up a head of steam will be alone for long stretches of the race. You pick off the lumbering Banks dories fairly quickly, work your way through the nimbler oar-on-gun-wale craft, wherries, whitehalls, and the like, then there's a lull before the fastest racing kayaks and 6-person outrigger canoes come storming up from behind in a hail of hut-huts and hi-yos.



Blackburn 2005

Report & Photos by Kinley Gregg

Paddling though, you start in a crowd, and you stay in a crowd. Then, as the faster classes with later start times catch up, you are overtaken by a crowd. A very large crowd. It's like being stranded in the breakdown lane of a kayak-carrying conveyer belt.

One of the great advantages of rowing over paddling is that, facing backwards, you watch the boats you have overtaken get farther and farther behind. At worst, you watch the approach of boats that haven't managed to catch you yet. Paddling, on the other hand, suffers you to watch boats that overtook you get farther and farther ahead. For 20 miles. It's very discouraging. By the time I reached the finish, the band was playing and lunch was half gone.

Nonetheless, times were fast. Race day dawned hot and as we waited for the start among the marshes of the Annisquam River, it promised to be utterly stifling. But beyond Halibut Point and Rockport, competitors encountered a slight breeze that, while barely ruffling the water, stirred the air we breathed. Several class records fell and the sliding seat double of Jeb Besser and Dan Debonis set a new course record of 2:19:27.

As it turned out, a woman did show up to row, but it wouldn't have been much of a race. Rookie Gia DeAngelis screamed around the course in 2:51:20, obliterating my class record of 2:57:30 set back in the Cambrian period. Tom Mailhot and Sarah Evertson were best by 1-1/2 hours in mixed kayak doubles, and Carolyn Brosius beat all (male) comers in single outrigger canoes.

When Paul Neil started bringing a guideboat to Blackburn, I found his choice of a vessel gratingly dissonant. Adirondack

guideboats have their place and that place is not the New England coast. But Paul kept winning, guideboats proliferated, and I got distracted by the influx of Hawaiian outriggers. This year, Paul brought a St. Lawrence skiff, but the result was same as he edged out Jon Aborn for top spot in fixed seat singles. Another St. Lawrence skiff, crewed by Nicole Ritchie and Brian Quarrier, took fixed seat doubles, prevailing over perennial winners Donald and Dustin Carter rowing the *Daniel J. Murphy*.

In the past, the Cape Ann Rowing Club lumped all non-racing kayaks together, resulting in an immense men's touring class of paddlers in everything from plastic bird-watching pods to serious boats built for speed. This year the Club attempted to break touring kayaks into three loosely defined tiers, leaving some discretion to the entrant as to where to place himself, but warning, "These rules are intentionally left a little loose to help people match their abilities to the competition... Please do not take advantage of these rules to gain an easy win."

Unfortunately, a glance at the results reveals that the Spirit of the Blackburn did not in every instance assert itself. For example, the winner of touring kayaks B (beginner paddlers in slower boats less than 17' in length) is listed as paddling an Epic 18. Or is that an Epic 17? Didn't Greg Barton win racing kayaks in an Epic 18 a couple years back? But then, Barton's not a beginning paddler.

There also seemed to be some confusion about whether the Echo rowing shell belonged in the racing (length to beam ratio greater than 7 to 1) or touring class. While I'm sure CACR would prefer not to play nanny, Blackburn has probably attained the stature where some policing of applications is in order, and incorrect entries removed to their proper classes.

Top Ten

| | | |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------------|---------|
| 1. Jeb Besser & Dan Debonis | Sliding double, Maas | 2:19:27 |
| 2. Ted Van Dusen & Henry Hamilton | Sliding double, Van Dusen | 2:27:10 |
| 3. Joe Holland & Dana Gaines | Sliding double, Kookaburra | 2:27:45 |
| 4. Blake Conant et al. | 6 man outrigger | 2:29:10 |
| 5. Russ Cone & Peter Kermond | Sliding double, Maas | 2:30:16 |
| 6. Greg Barton | Surf ski, Epic V 10 | 2:31:23 |
| 7. Mike Handa et al. | 6 man outrigger | 2:33:52 |
| 8. Peter Schwab | Sliding single, Peinert | 2:35:51 |
| 9. OCC Northeast | 6 man outrigger | 2:37:02 |
| 10. Rich Klajnscek | Sliding single, Rec Racer II | 2:44:29 |



Tom Lawler's Adirondack Guideboat finished 6th in class in 4:46:38. Tom is president of the organizing Cape Ann Rowing Club.



This dory from the Gloucester schooner *Adventure*, rowed by Stan Wasserman and Doug Hall, finished 5th in class in 5:23:24.



Henry Szostek's self-designed and built sliding seat single *Yantu's* cockpit. His poor man's GPS consists of a set of notes for compass headings at various points around Cape Ann:



Siren Song, the only 6-oared gig, was woefully mismatched against a sliding seat four. *Siren Song* was built in the early '90s heyday of gigs racing in the Blackburn for an all-women team and has recently been restored to service for a local Gloucester harbor rowing group. None of the other 20 plus gigs that turn out in March for the 3.5 mile sprint at Hull's Snow Row choose to enter the 20-mile Blackburn.

Class Winners

In Order of Finishing Times

(Number of entries in class)

| | | | |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------|---------|
| Sliding seat racing doubles (5) | Besser & Debonis | Maas double | 2:19:27 |
| Outrigger canoes men (6) | Blake Conant et al. | | 2:29:10 |
| Surf skis men (19) | Greg Barton | Epic V 10 | 2:31:23 |
| Sliding seat racing singles men (7) | Peter Schwab | Peinert Dolphin | 2:35:51 |
| Kayaks, racing men (4) | Brian Heath | Thunderbolt | 2:48:31 |
| Multi-oars with cox (2) | Railton et al. | Mainville sliding 4 | 2:49:00 |
| Sliding seat racing single women (1) | Gia DeAngelis | Peinert Dolphin | 2:51:20 |
| Outrigger canoes mixed (3) | Kent Island OCC | | 2:55:15 |
| Kayaks, double mixed (5) | Mailhot & Evertson | Guillemont | 2:55:32 |
| Open (3) | Larkin, Wolbach & Parker | Sliding triple | 2:59:06 |
| Outrigger canoes women (1) | Northeast OCC | | 3:01:53 |
| Sliding seat touring doubles (3) | White & Hovey | Alden Ocean Shell | 3:06:32 |
| Kayaks, fast touring men (28) | John Redos | EFT | 3:07:55 |
| Fixed seat doubles (3) | Ritchie & Quarrier | St. Lawrence skiff | 3:20:45 |
| Kayaks, racing women (1) | Kathy Manizza | Thunderbolt | 3:22:33 |
| Kayaks, touring A men (32) | David Jones | Epic 18 | 3:24:28 |
| Outrigger singles (5) | Carolyn Brosius | | 3:28:10 |
| Surf skis women (2) | Alexandra Landrum | Fenn Mako xXT | 3:33:04 |
| Kayaks, double men (2) | Finear & Finear | Adventure Extreme | 3:34:46 |
| Sliding seat touring singles (4) | Bill Russell | Alden Ocean Shell | 3:41:36 |
| Kayaks, touring B men (12) | Robert Ashworth | Epic 18 | 3:41:50 |
| Kayaks, touring A women (5) | Sharon Barbano | Seda Impulse | 3:42:57 |
| Kayaks, fast touring women (1) | Pam Browning | Surge | 3:43:49 |
| Banks dories double (6) | Cunningham & Atkinson | Banks dory | 3:51:33 |
| Fixed seat singles (9) | Paul Neil | St. Lawrence skiff | 3:52:29 |
| Kayaks, touring B women (2) | Mary Beth Gangloff | P+H Capella | 4:56:12 |
| Kayaks, double women (1) | Baumann & Baumann | Impex. Mendota | 5:35:49 |
| Banks dories single (1) | Jim Tarantino | Banks dory | 5:44:07 |



On the beach at the finish a peek at the variety of rowing craft still coming back year after year despite the flood of kayaks which have come to dominate the event in numbers.



My first attempt at paddling the Blackburn involved changing from an Alden Star rowing shell to this Surf ski resulting in a substantially slower time of 3:41:08 than my rowing best of 2:57:30.



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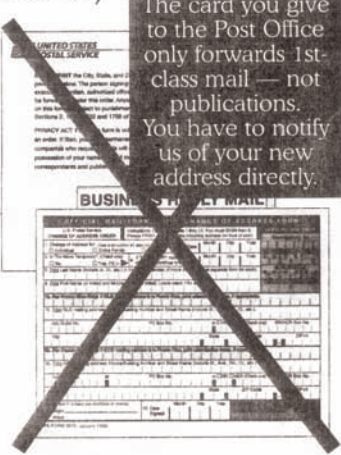
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On June 25, the 17th Annual Cardboard Boat Races took place in Oxford, Maryland. The race course is about an acre in area and a few hundred yards around the border. Maryland Natural Resources police and Coast Guard patrolled outside the course and kept an eye on the many private boats observing the races. Volunteers in private power boats made safety patrols inside the area, but after they twice ran over floats and cut anchor lines Skipper Marquess sent them away, saying over the microphone he didn't trust them with people in the water.

This year there were 60 entries. Racing boats made of cardboard would certainly qualify as "messing about in boats." The rules are simple: the boat will be made of cardboard and can be fastened with duct tape, rope, string, glue, staples, and can be supported with up to three board feet of wood. A creative builder using waxed cardboard attached with duct tape can come up with a surprisingly light, agile craft that could compete with many modern kayaks.

After 17 years' experience, Skipper Marquess, in his oversized commodore hat, has devised several distinct classes for the actual racing.

"The Battle of the Brave" is between local police and fire departments and is hotly contested because inevitably there will be some ribbing back and forth between departments over the coming year. It became obvious to me that although the Coast Guard and Maryland Department of Natural Resources Police are well versed in seamanship in their powered patrol craft, they rarely have an opportunity to paddle a canoe. Oxford Fire Department fielded two 15-year-old cadets who knew how to paddle a canoe and ran away with it. Some of the older police muttered about a post race protest, but there are no protests in fun racing. There is a post-race

The Oxford Cardboard Boat Races

By Robert Musch

party at Schooner's Landing Restaurant instead.

The "Corporate Challenge" race is between different local businesses represented by their own employees. Nearby restaurants build boats and crew them with attractive waitresses in two-piece bathing suits. This race is very popular viewing for 1,000 people in attendance. Some of the ladies showed they know how to handle a paddle.

Most participants and observers view cardboard boat racing as fun and laughter on a bright sunny beach. Some people take it seriously and for them there is the "Fast Boat Race." They make sleek, graceful boats manned by strong young men accustomed to paddling competition. It shows the crowd what can be done with so little.

I think the most popular class was the "Funny Boat" class. There was a submarine with a periscope, a sea gull, two alligators, a fish, a human-sized crab float, a 20' monster that supported eight paddlers plus a coxswain on the tiller. Judging took place before the race and a trophy was awarded to a pirate ship, *The Scourge of Emily*. The pirate ship was complete with a cardboard mast and sail which was lost in the heat of competition. Emily Pendergrass, 10, said the ship was built by her dad in two days and she just hoped it would go around the course. She and her dad were dressed in pirate costumes. The *Big Banana* was a box filled with cardboard flotation containers. The *Fish Pool* was just plain cardboard painted with water-based paint. It disintegrated, to the amusement of the crowd, after a hole the size of a

soccer ball formed in the bottom. Not deterred, the crew lifted it on their shoulders and carried it around the race course. Water depth was less than 5' feet, determined by a distinguished group of local politicians who make a ceremony of measuring water clarity before the races.

The "Children's Race" was for kids under 12. All participants had to wear personal flotation devices and safety was emphasized. These cardboard boat races are sponsored by the Boat Bums International to support Special Olympics. Some of these handicapped children were on the beach and participated fully in the competition.

The final race was a "Fun Race" for anyone who wanted to participate. Boats in various states of disintegration were carried to the water and anyone who could get a paddle jumped in. This is the race where politicians, states attorney, local celebrities, and people standing by get in a boat and paddle. Many got wet but everyone had a good time. I saw one craft completely covered in newspaper being held above the water by a crew because they feared once wet it would fall apart. It not only completed the course but later I saw it on top of a station wagon being hauled home. An announcement was made over the loudspeaker that a dumpster was at the far end of the beach for those boats that didn't survive the rigors of racing.

After the cardboard boat races there was a demonstration race of Chesapeake Crab Scrape boats, a new class of racing power boats, but that is another story. There has been talk of altering race rules to allow powered cardboard races, but Skipper Marquess downplayed that as not likely to happen.

More information can be had at <wmarquess@bluecrab.org>, (410) 820-4104, Debbie Wilkins @verizon.net or at (810) 819-0036.



The human size crab float entry in the Funny Boat class. It was a close call for the Funny Boat Award between it and *The Scourge of Emily*, a pirate boat with cardboard mast, sail, and parrot in the crow's nest. The pirate boat won.

A submarine, two alligators, a pirate ship, a crab float and other funny boats line up very, durable in the water.



This long boat held eight paddlers and a coxswain. Had the course been a mile long it could have been the hero of the day, but it was frequently fouled by smaller craft on the short tight course.





Gull-a-Bull was a funny boat hit with the crowd. Its short waterline limited its speed but winning isn't everything.



Drown No Mo looked like a disaster waiting to happen. Surprisingly it finished its first race very well but later on ended up in the dumpster.



Coast Guard, Natural Resources Police and the Oxford Fire Department competed in the "Battle of the Brave."

Skipper Marquess atop the Oxford fire truck was the master of ceremonies offering lively commentary. Starts and finishes were by shotgun blasts.



The *Fish Pool* was plain cardboard painted with water-based paint. It finished the race being carried by its crew.

Cardboard can be fashioned into light, agile craft, but it is not very durable in water.



In the swirls of the current a dark head broke surface 10' in front of the canoe. Water dripped down heavily matted strands of hair and the head moved to the right. Was this some myth made real? Was it, I don't know, some sort of aboriginal living within the confines of the wild Housatonic River? What the...! In need of advice and a sense of reality, I tried a short yelp to my wife and her friend who paddled up ahead. The yell instantly put the head under and it stayed down. It had come out of a snag lodged into the river bank and now it was gone. Phewwww. This was on the second of our three trips, in 2004 and 2005, down the troubled yet beautiful Housatonic. Had the river's underwater nightmare surfaced in some mythic form? Or was it a large beaver or otter?

The Housatonic River starts in several places around and about Pittsfield in western Massachusetts. One branch flows by the now mostly defunct General Electric plant (We Bring Good Things to Life... or, nowadays, they've got "Ecomagination" as they say in market-speak). Here's something GE put on the internet:

"GE: Imagination at Work. For 124 years, we've been thinking big and making things happen."

One big thing they did in Pittsfield over many years was to dump PCBs into the Housatonic. These chemicals are dangerous to people and animals. The PCBs flowed downstream, got into the mud, and now they won't go away. That's making things happen, pretty awful things. Yet boaters and even fishermen continue to enjoy, however timidly, the river.

From <http://www.housatonic-river.com/> comes this:

"Americans Rivers, a Washington based environmental group, issued a report in April naming the Housatonic River as #7 on its list of America's 10 Most Endangered Rivers."

And from a branch of Trout Unlimited, http://www.mianustu.org/hous_pcb.htm:

"Ducks taken from the most polluted section of the Housatonic contain PCB levels reaching more than 200 times EPA's bench-

Three Boating Adventures on the Housatonic

By Dick Burnham



Portage landing at the Canaan Dam on Trip #3.

mark for human consumption. Their carcasses must be handled as hazardous waste."

And here we were, cautious but happy as larks on holiday, paddling down what's been called a "toxic waterway." I should modify that quote, though, to "incredibly beautiful toxic waterway." My wife, Ulla, and I took three trips on the Housatonic, she in her plastic kayak and me in my homemade lapstrake canoe made of thin plywood and epoxy (a design derived by a likeable Carl Bausch, a disenchanted architect who found good things to like in lightweight boats and

marketed after Carl's death with construction drawings by Tom Hill in Charlotte, Vermont).

Our first trip was in the upper reaches, yet below the former GE plant site. We launched from the edge of Woods Pond by the Lenox RR station and worked our way, on a placid summer day, upstream against a river that showed little current on the surface, although lone strings of aquatic growth pointed downstream.

We found the river, despite all the talk and fears about PCBs, to be delightful if one kept foot and hand out of the water and mud. On this, our first trip, we came upon a fisherman who was pleased with the fishing: "There's big ones in here! But don't eat them, you'll glow in the dark." We paddled on, the general impression being that the Housatonic River was a wonderful ribbon of water with narrow bands of luxuriant native vegetation, overhanging trees, shrubs, wildflowers, as well as agricultural fields on its banks.

And within this beltway of water, PCBs, and vegetation there lived a profusion of wildlife. Birds were just everywhere; Canadian geese, ducks, herons, swallows, and all those smaller fellows for which I have no names. Great paddling on a nice day, we worked our way four miles upstream to the Decker Canoe Access landing where we took a look, then turned about, and started our return trip downstream. Our anticipated free ride downstream was offset by wind squarely in our face, so we had a full eight miles of exercise-rich paddling. We use the AMC book, *Water Trails of Western Massachusetts*, for specific information on launch and put-out sites and river conditions.

Our second trip, some nine miles long, was the one that brought me face to face with the Housatonic's version of the creature from the black lagoon, or so I imagine. We started above Sheffield, Massachusetts, at the Old Covered Bridge in a river then muscular with current and back eddies after recent heavy rains. We were a party of three paddlers, with Lynn Fisher joining in her kayak. We ended below the town at The Trustees of



Reservations' Bartholomew's Cobble nature site. The TTOR is a private Massachusetts open land conservation group and we are members. The Cobble sponsors educational mini-treks with resident naturalists. We have taken a few tours there, learning about spring flowers or birds or what's good to eat in the woods (when distant from the river...).

Our most interesting guided tour was to an abandoned beaver pond area that empties into the Housatonic. We saw the sinewy waterways the beavers put in (these guys know how to bring good things to life) and the sticks they'd stored in the mud for winter eating and then abandoned. Much of this is simply hidden below when it's a pond. Today it is a rich complex of footprints left by deer, bobcat, fisher cat, raccoon, bear, and others on the muddy banks and the wildflowers and grasses growing in the once flooded pond. The naturalist said the beavers left because they'd eaten all the edible trees but would return once trees were naturally reseeded and succulent. It would take about seven years and the grassy complex would, again, become a beaver pond. For now they have retreated to the Housatonic River or some other low lying area ready for their eating habits.

The third trip started where we'd left off. We put in near the Cobble, this time with Heidi Lindy in her kayak, and spent the day paddling downstream. We continued within the by now familiar Housatonic "beltway" of river and narrow vegetation borders (sometimes only a tree or two deep) with such company as an osprey, a red tailed hawk, kingfisher, a "maybe an eagle," some curious cows, geese, and many more birds than I could hope to identify. There were holes burrowed into the riverbanks where muskrat or beaver lived and slides where otters made their way down the banks.

Paddling was easy in the morning sun and shortly we crossed into Connecticut and coasted by the former home of the naturalist,

Hal Borland. About midway through the trek we came to the remains of the Canaan Dam. We pulled out at the portage landing and eventually slid all three boats down a steep embankment with ropes, got them over some rocks, and then, once again, we were into the flow of the Housatonic. We might have been able to shoot the small run of rapids at the breached dam, but I wasn't interested in seeing that 4mm thick plywood lapstrake-sided canoe take a rock sideways.

We had lunch at "Snag Marina." It was an old tree snag caught on the river's bottom. We floated our watercraft so that, between water current and wind, we were secured for a no-worries docking and a chatty lunch.

Exhausted in the hot summer sun after 12 miles of paddling, some half of it with a post-morning wind in our faces, we pulled out at the trip's real stopper, the hydroelectric dam at Falls Village, Connecticut. I waited with the boats while the truck was retrieved and heard kids splashing and swimming amongst the PCBs. A couple of fishermen launched their boat, they were seeking bass, bass that I presumed they wouldn't eat.

For three trips the Housatonic River and its foliated banks were nice, if poisonous, yet this was but a narrow ribbon of environmental space for boating. While the PCB issue is trouble enough (a dollar headache for GE's thinkers and makers that ranges up to \$250 million and is climbing... whoops, there goes the suitcase with all the profits!), this narrowness of the environment gave me a sense that the river's richness was not firm, that it could quickly be erased. Yet there's no choice now but to accept this ribbon, while years ago it was a wide environmental system that held creatures far and near who would travel to the river for water, for prey.

I'm reminded of an environmental contrast, a sense of natural wilderness I experienced on a recent research project in the South Pacific. Along the coast of Papua, New Guinea, in the Solomon Sea, large schools of

tuna broke water, dappling the surface and schools of flickering, silver, yard-long king mackerel leapt so high and so near that I could see their eyes swivel about as they surveyed us in our little boat, boating above their domain. And, when nudging our way into the narrow inlet of an off the map village, we were instructed to not wade in the water. There weren't any PCBs to fret about, but among the luxuriant growth of nipa palms and fluttering butterflies coasting over the river there were large crocodiles just about anywhere. Later, inland along a small river I found, along with malarial mosquitoes, a profusion of rosewood trees and rattan brush, "canoe" trees, and the important life sustaining sago palm. Such a wide and rich environment seemed solid and connected. And, don't you know, the Housatonic was once like this, without the crocs, of course.

At our most upstream location on the Housatonic we were but a few miles from Arrowhead, Herman Melville's home and now a museum. He's the guy who, in *Moby Dick*, described in meticulous detail for us the unromantic plundering of the world's seas for whales. Whales were turned, by an industry involving Ishmael and the *Pequod*, into oil for a lubricant and for the home night lights. And cash.

The Housatonic River seems but one environmental delight now eviscerated and turned into something thin yet strange. It was a dumping ground, but it is still beautiful. Sort of like a whale not yet lanced, though severely harpooned and still swimming. Those nearby calculating folks in the whale-boat could have taken that harpoon out. But they didn't.

Today on our Housatonic we need to dredge those PCBs out and bring health and environmental exuberance to us once again. The whales have made something of a comeback, no? The pleasure of boating on a revived Housatonic River would rise from timidly nice to outrageously stupendous.





An inland stream in Papua, New Guinea, flowing towards the sea. In the distance clouds mas the mountains. In the foreground at right is a cultivated garden's banana plant.



Nipa palm lined river in Papua, New Guinea. Crocodiles exceeding 20' in length frequent this river and have claimed lives.

"We was runnin' off down the far side of Nantucket comin' back from the Banks on a three-day-old nor'easterly, gettin' ready to round up at the bottom to try and make Montauk. It was good fast sailin' most of the time, but every so often we'd take a good one on the quarter and it'd just wash the whole stern up and she'd dive her lee bow down and just sort of trip on her cheek. She was workin' good and tellin' us about it with every groan below and wail aloft, I tell ya. 'Course the rudder was getting slammed around this way and that and it was impossible to control during the broaches, but she'd spill off pretty good all heeled over, come up and luff like a wet dog until two men holdin' the helm to weather got her back off and sailin' again.

"Down below you could hear the cook cursin' up his own storm whenever that happened, 'cause he'd end up half lyin' on the stove if he was occupied workin' with his hands, which we all thought was just a little funny but you had to have some pity for the old fellow, too. His shins and elbows are a mess.

"Once we had the main caught by the lee for a moment and that was a scare, but the preventer kept it from jibing and it stalled long enough for some guys to jump to the tiller and she came back with a cannon shot that was surprising didn't blow her right out at the clew.

"So we're pretty smart thinkin' we'll get a little in the lee south of the island, but the captain's sayin' he wants to harden right up after we get around and stay close to the land. I figure we'll have the rail under for sure, so I call the men to reef the fores'l twice and the

We Was Runnin'

By John P. Turner III

main once, and douse the flying jib altogether.

"They get that done while we're still downwind, and the lightship's hard on the starboard beam, so it's time to head up and we haul in.

"The seas did calm some out of the fetch, but the wind picked up comin' over the land. We're close hauled and on our ear and not footin' worth a damn, so I order the stays'l down and full reef in the fore cause we got a lee helm and green water full over the bulwarks. I guess a halyard washed off a pin and was lyin' along the scuppers so they weren't drainin' like they should.

"But a wicked gust hit us before we could shorten sail and one of the foremast chainplates lets go, and that shroud's knockin' around the deck with all its gear, so we release the sheet to save the mast but as we're at it the other shroud goes from the strain and nothin' we could do but watch as the whole stubborn mast starts screamin' at the partners and splinterin' above the deck.

"Well, it's a fine mess, for sure. We're all scramblin' to release halyards and sheets to just let off and drop everything before we lose the whole rig, and the gaffs are flying like they want to kill someone but we're careful and in a few minutes we got sails on the deck and hangin' overboard, but we're upright in the water and no one's lost.

"The foremast hasn't parted but it's swayin', held standing by the forestays and the jack, so we secure both runners on the

main and come 'round 'til the wind's to port so those port fore shrouds'll have some tension.

"Now we sit for a minute and reconnoiter the situation, then we square away the sails and gear all lyin' around. We're blowin' off the land, so that's good, anyway. We take a sounding and determine it's too deep to anchor.

"First thing was to jury-rig the starboard shrouds and get that mast held up so we set about to that. The one that parted was easy with a length spliced in, but the chainplate took a bit of work 'cause it pulled clear loose from the frame. We ended up runnin' another line all fitted with chafing gear under the hull and up to the plate on the starboard side and figured that would hold to Montauk.

"We got some tension and the mast pretty straight, and got to work splinting the break with a bunch of sisters we robbed from the second boat's floors and a seizing of fish wire turned every few wraps with a twist, and about two hours after the mishap we were ready to hoist again.

"It was all just fine after that, but we got in late, and the fellow supposed to run the coach out here was drunk and we had to almost drag him out of the tavern. I'm sorry.

"Well, you tell your son you're sorry in the morning. Did you manage to get something for a gift?"

"I have a Canadian one-dollar piece. He's 12 now, eh? It's like treasure.

"That's good, I suppose.

"And the captain said he'd be happy to have him next trip.

"When Hell freezes, John Knapp!

"Well, it will be December."

Jane and I hit the jackpot this morning. We have been working on the roof trying to fix where those four hurricanes wore out all the nail holes in the old corrugated asphalt roof ("Onduline" French stuff, cheap... very popular on Third World structures like chicken houses in Georgia) that has been on our coast house ever since it was built. It is good stuff and ours is easily the oldest roof on this island and has proven itself to be 10mph proof two or three times, but it is old and brittle and all that wiggling from all those storms skirting first one side of us and then the other wore out the nail holes and, where it used to leak pretty bad, now it just pours in a bad rain.

We are putting another roof on here one sheet at a time. To do that we have to take the old sheet off and it is a pain in the neck. The nails have grown to the wood with rust sort of like how an iron rod driven in the ground grows to the dirt. It takes three pullings to get them out. I had to make a special rig to do it and, even with that, it takes such a lurch on the handle that I almost fall off the roof three times for every durn nail, and there are about 50 pounds of them up there. It really is a pain in the neck. Fortunately, it is such a pain in the neck and I am so old and decrepit now that I am ready to knock off about 9:30 when it gets hot. Of course, Jane is still young and spry but she can't do it all by herself and she has to stop, too, so we quit and go on an adventure.

This morning we decided to run all the way around the island to see what's what. It is always an interesting trip. The island is in a continuous state of change and I have been trying to figure it out for many years. A lot of the bayside is pretty much stable. There are places where it has been eroding for a long time and other places (like where our house is... knock wood) where it seems unchanged since we were children. The ends of the island and the seaside are what are in a dynamic state. It averages out to bad beach erosion all along the whole seaside of the island and accretion at the ends, particularly down to the west. Every time there is a significant meteorological event some houses go in and get strewn down the seaside beach to the west by the prevailing longshore current.

When we built our house there were three building lots between us and the seaside. Now we own to the high water mark on the seaside beach and those lots are down (I guess) at the west end. Since real estate prices have gone up so much, people who bought property over here on this sand bar and forgot about it are finding out that it just ain't there anymore when it occurs to them to cash in.

One man sent the surveyor to stake his investment out for the realtor and the stakes showing the depth of the lot were about 2' apart where mean high water had crept in through the years. That's some mean high water, ain't it? That man was probably counting on that little wad of money for something he needed. Now all he has is a bill from the surveyor. I wonder if he paid his last year's taxes? Anyway, that's your real estate investment lesson for this story. I think the legal term is "Caveat Emptor."

So we went riding in the Rescue Minor to the east. I was standing up looking through my Polaroid glasses at the fish on the flats and there were plenty to see. For one thing, this (early June... actually D-Day) is the sea-

Bluefish & Hardtails

Feeding the Multitude

By Robb White

son of the cownosed rays down here. Dog Island is a Mecca for rays of most every kind, but the astonishing pilgrimage of the cownoses is something. There are usually some of them around all year round but now is when they breed, I guess. They swim in formations just like geese and military aircraft. They vary in size within the population but all of them in any formation are the same size.

They fly leisurely through the water as if they are purposefully going somewhere except a group of them will pass purposefully by another group heading in the opposite direction. I guess they, like all non-human creatures, know exactly what they are doing but it sure does seem like one crowd would tell the other ones, "Hey, y'all... ain't nothing going on back there where we came from, might as well turn around and go with us," but they don't. They just keep on moseying up and down the bay. I think their strolling is social in nature and cownose rays are perfectly satisfied to be in the company of their peers no matter how foolish their mission might seem to outsiders.

You know people are sort of like that. I think it is a sign of success when a species can afford to engage in illogical behavior. I don't think cownose rays are the only ones. "The characteristic human trait is not awareness but conformity. (Michael Crichton, "The Lost World"). Swim on cownoses.

We tooled it on down the bay in a light chop. I have been varying my running speed up and down to see what I like. All last year I ran about 12.5 since that has always been my favorite outboard skiff speed, but the Rescue Minor planes out to what I call wakeless at a lot less than that and 10.5 was the speed I liked at first. That's what I have gone back to, too. I think it is something about the syncopation of the three cylinders. Anyway, 10.5 is very soothing to me even though the boat actually gets its best gas mileage at 15.5. Oh well, a man has to indulge himself every now and then. That little sip of extra fuel is sort of like a little sip of Madeira after supper. You go your way cownoses and I'll go mine.

Cownoses have their babies live earlier in the spring (I guess) because there were a lot of groups of very small rays. I wonder if they are all siblings. Stingarees birth their babies live, too, and all ready to put you in terrible misery. I don't know if stingarees are social in nature or not but they seem to be sort of grouped up. Maybe a litter of cownosed rays are all born at the same time and stay together until breeding time. Maybe they are strutting their stuff like people do... in groups. Maybe each group is a bunch of sisters checking out the bunches of brothers. I have seen stingarees breeding (bunch of little males bunched up around one big female right at the edge) but never cownoses.

Stingarees are bottom fish and cownoses swim along in the water like spotted rays. Individuals from groups might become attracted to each other in passing and swim off into the blue depths of the pass or something to consummate a little conversation. Hell, I don't know. Anyway, there were

plenty of cownosed rays swimming diamond shaped formations tranquilly along in all directions. They barely shied aside as the Rescue Minor eased on by. They, next to great barracudas, are the most fearless of fish. Sharks, even big sharks, will run from a boat.

Though we didn't see any this trip around in the clear water that is typical of the summer, there are sometimes spotted rays around here. They get huge (say 10' wingspan) and swim on the flats like cownosed rays. They don't swim in groups but they are easy to see. They are black on top with white spots. Sometimes they'll be in water so shallow that their wingtips will stick up at each leisurely stroke. They'll run from a boat (make a wake that will break on the beach) but they'll let you get pretty close. They also jump way out of the water and come down with such a splash that it is a marvel to see.

A jumping porpoise (we call "dolphins" porpoises) ain't in it with a big spotted ray and I have never seen a little one. They are something else. I have heard they'll bite a hook but I wouldn't know. I have lost my rig to a good many inexplicable things though. Cownoses will bite a hook for sure. I don't know if they are good to eat or not though. Stingarees would feed you if you were starving but the meat is gummy and peculiar tasting. I am not fond of sharks either. You know I and all my family are gourmets... ain't crazy about any of the elasmobranchs.

To get to the meat of this story (finally), when we got all the way around the east end (noting many mullet, sheepheads, and redfish in the clear water) we tooled it all the way down the seaside looking at the rubble from the houses that went in due to the four hurricanes and current bar formation (no bars parallel to the beach like is the usual summer situation, yet). We stayed out far enough from the beach not to bother the mullet that we could see like they were in an aquarium as the gentle waves peaked up and carried the fish, too. In the right light a fish is surrealistically displayed when that happens. I have always wanted to take a picture. We scared balao (half beaks, pronounced ballyhoo... real good bait) which skittered off with their whole bodies completely clear of the water and swimming with just the lower tip of their tail like a flying fish getting up enough speed to take off. If balao had long pectoral fins they could fly, too. Jane thinks the word "skeddadle" was invented just for them.

Eventually we got to the west end of the island. For the last two years there have been none of the prominent bars that usually form along there making deep coves, one right behind the other all along the sea side of the end of the island. That's a wonderful thing. A child can stand on one of those bars and fish with a fishing pole in the cove and catch almost anything. When we were children we used to catch pinfish, sheepheads, flounders, speckled trout (squeteague) pompano, and blue fish in there. This time we eased the Rescue Minor over the bar in the surf (much to the amazement of some fishermen fishing out in the pass) and anchored in the cove. We saw mullet everywhere but the water was real clear and they wouldn't let me get within 50 feet. They just insolently crossed the bar from the lagoon to the sea and waited for me to wade by and crossed back behind me.

I was hoping for a sheephead which is a little bit stupider than a mullet but the water

was too clear for them, too. As I was wading out the bar (about thigh deep) looking so intensely into the lagoon with my Polaroid sunglasses that it was about to give me a headache, I saw some good sized fish easing in within easy range of the net. "Cain't be mullet... too stupid... must be black drum," I said. "Oh well," I concluded as I let the old net (two years old... many holes tied up) fly. I caught seven fish but by the time I could get them to the boat there were only two left in the net. Bluefish will bite out of a net, you know, and big bluefish will bite an unnecessarily big hole it seems to me.

While I was gone with the net Jane waded out to the mouth where the outwash from the waves that break over the bar go back to sea. That is always a good place to fish. For one thing, the outwash (called "undertow" by ignorant people and "rip current" by the NOAA and official lifeguards) will carry your bait way out if you don't have a big lead sinker on it and that is real good because it keeps the bait acting like something to eat and it also keeps the bait off the bottom so the durn inedible hardhead catfish won't get hooked.

I'll give you this little fishing tip. If you find one of those places, put a live shrimp on your hook and let him drift out. If he makes 100' I would be surprised. What you'll usually catch is a skipjack (ladyfish... 10 pounder) and she'll show you what it means when somebody says a fish will fight. They'll jump 10 feet in the air and pull so hard you'll think you caught the biggest fish in the ocean. If you are standing in the surf they'll swim around and around you and between your legs and tie you up like Zazoo Pitts on the railroad tracks in an old Western movie. When you get her in you'll be surprised at what a little fish did all that. I have never seen a 10 pounder... three pounds is more like it, but one of them will pull like 15 and run like a bullet. They are fun. Well, one of them is fun but they get to be a pain in the neck after a while what with live shrimp at 25 cents a pop.

Jane didn't have any live shrimp but she did have some jigs and little pieces of fresh cut up pinfish which is pretty good. I watched her and she fished for a while and then went back to the boat and sat in the shade of the Bimini top. I figured she had gotten tired of being tied up by skipjacks but when I got back with my tore up net and two bluefish I found that she had just lost them jigs. We both surmised that it was bluefish and we were right. I'll tell you what I, a Southerner, know about bluefish, the national fish of the Yankee saltwater fisherman, here in a minute but first I need to tell you about hardtails.

There were a lot of small pogies (menhaden) in the lagoon and they were getting washed out the opening by the current and a bunch of various kinds of fish were eating them as they emerged into the deep blue water of the pass. We could see Spanish mackerel, skipjacks, and bluefish jumping clear of the water as they gobbled the pogies and we knew there were even bigger fish like jack crevalle below. In my youth, such a thing as that would get me very excited thinking of tarpon and other real big fish like cobio (cobia, ling) and I would have lost all my tackle to the toothy things like all them bluefish and Spanish mackerel. I have changed these days though. I don't need to bother with any tarpon anymore. "Jane," I

said, "reckon there are any hardtails down under all this commotion?"

With that she picked up her pole and tied on the last jig and flipped it out. It was gone in one bite. I had a little piece of wire, though, so we rigged up a hook on the wire with a piece of cut bait and tried again. I tried to let it get down under the mess of gobbling on the surface. Hardtails are peculiar in their feeding habits. I don't think they catch pogies. I think they lurk under the melee and eat half pogies that bluefish have bitten in two. If you can get the bait down to them, you can catch them. I caught one hardtail before something big took my hook, wire and all. A hardtail has always been one of my favorite fish ever since I was a child. They come into the bay in the early summer and only stay for a few weeks and then they are gone. One must make hay while the sun shines.

I used to go out in the Reynolds (Reynolds Aluminum Boat... 194?) and fish all by myself when I was young. The first time I got into the hardtails, I guess I was about 10 years old. I had an old fly rod but I used it like a fishing pole. I don't remember the exact rig but I am sure it was just a naked hook with some kind of bait on it. Back in those days shrimp were very cheap so that might have been what I had. Anyway, I was inexperienced and hardly ever caught anything out of the boat but damned catfish. Mostly I lost my bait to pinfish because I, like so many other ignorant people, thought you have to have a big hook to catch big fish.

Anyway, something grabbed my bait and headed for Yucatan. I thought it must have been a submarine. Finally I caught the mystery fish and he was only about a pound. He was a little man, though, and I quickly caught some more. When I got back to the house, I had about 30 of those hardtails. Nobody knew what they were except my Momma. "Hardtails!" she hollered, running for her knife. She and I cleaned all of them and fed the multitude and all those people remembered what they were after that. There are few better eating fish than hardtails.

What they are in the book is "blue runners" and are one of the favorite baits of billfisherman. They are little jacks like Jack Crevalle and Amberjacks but much smaller and much better to eat. The name hardtail comes from how they have ridges of enlarged scales down either side of the caudal peduncle making a thwartships hard fin. You fillet them off the backbone and hold them by that little hard handle to eat them. They have thin skin that doesn't shrink up so the fillets fry up flat. They are also extremely good smoked. You can smoke the little fillets until they are dried out like jerky. Whoa, y'all. Be careful not to founder yourself. Each one of those little shriveled up fillets will reconstitute itself into half a pound of meat in your belly.

My correspondence with various Yankees has alerted me to the fact that bluefish are very common up the Atlantic coast and are sought after by fishermen. Some of these fishermen tell me that when they are trying to catch the very high class striped bass (we have them here, too, but they are fresh water fish and live in rivers... never catch them in the bay) they actually catch mostly bluefish. There are so many of them that they call them special names for how big they are like they do various sizes of quahogs (the littlest class of those are "cherrystones").

I don't remember all the various classes of bluefish but the littlest ones are called "snapper" blues and are very little. We don't have snapper blues down here.

As a matter of fact, bluefish are an intermittent thing here with no predictable regularity. Sometime ten years will pass by without us seeing any bluefish at all but, when they come, they dominate the situation because they are very big and plentiful. They are always exactly the same size (siblings?). The ones this year are all 18" long. That's a pretty good sized bluefish. We fried one and the hardtail for lunch and baked the other bluefish for supper. Bluefish are pretty good if you eat them while they are still very fresh but they ain't much (to a gourmet like me) after they have been refrigerated for one day and are inedible if you freeze them. They are like mullet that way. I have smoked bluefish and they are alright but they lose quality rapidly.

It is not the quality of the meat that makes bluefish memorable to us. It is the memory of them. I'll quickly flip out three stories for you. One time my cousin and I went camping back in the wild coast to the east of St. Marks in a great big aluminum butthead skiff I had for a while. It was in the fall of the year and we hoped to catch a bunch of redfish (red drum) to freeze and feed the multitude with. We had a big old icebox and were well set up to catch a boatload (which is possible if you know what you are doing, but we didn't). The boat was big enough to sleep in and that was what we were doing. We anchored out on the flats beyond no-see-um range and ate our Vienna sausages and apples and went to bed. I decided to suspend a little pinfish over the side on my booger pole which was a boat rod with a Penn #109 reel and about 10lb test line. I had a little piece of wire and a cork to keep the pinfish off the bottom away from the catfish.

We went to sleep lying in the bottom of the boat. About 2:30 in the morning something started taking line off the Penn. I could hear the loud clicker echoing through the aluminum of the boat right in my ear. I woke up but my cousin didn't. I caught a big bluefish (maybe another 18 incher). I could see other fish tearing up the water all around the boat so I got my casting rod and baited up and started pulling in these big blues one right after the other. I was so ignorant that I thought we could fill the icebox and feed the multitude with those, inedible after two days, bluefish so I punted my cousin in the side of the ribs hard enough to make his lips flap with the breath I knocked out of him but he still didn't wake up.

I kept on catching blues, one right behind the other. It was so exciting that I started missing the icebox with them and I am afraid some of them wound up in the bottom of the boat with my cousin and I am afraid one of them bit a notch out of his ear sort of like how you mark a hog except that the missing piece was perfectly semicircular. Man, it was a bloody mess when the pogies finally moved on taking those blues with them. That incident might account for some my prejudice against eating big bluefish.

I know some of the readers of this magazine come from the inland parts of this country (or possibly other countries) or the West Coast so have not had much bluefish experience so I'll just tell you. A bluefish is set up in the mouth with big triangular teeth so sharp and close together that they cut

clean. To people who know bluefish, the common awe associated with the name piranha loses a little significance. There aren't any 29" piranhas.

One year we had a plague of really big bluefish (all exactly 29" long... a terrible thing to contemplate). They were not only inedible but the very thought of them in the water with you sort of inhibits the joy of swimming. Bluefish are frenzy feeders and just about indiscriminate in their tastes when in a feeding frenzy. They'll strike an aluminum can and bite landing nets, gaffs, and paddles and the feet of outboard motors. Thousands of fishermen are badly bitten by bluefish every year up north (I am told). I have no doubt they'll bite anything they perceive needs to be bitten.

So, back when we finally finished this house over here on Dog's Island we sold the 23' plywood crab boat and fixed up a 26' surplus Navy motor whaleboat. We were deluding ourselves that we needed a big boat for everyday transportation. It was sort of convenient to have the boat tied to our dock way up the Carrabelle River. We could just drive down in a naked car and transfer the junk to the boat and crank up (after we had transferred the battery... a battery left unsupervised around here is a goner for sure) and ride to the island in any kind of weather at all. We even had a little wheelhouse aft so I could steer with the tiller since we didn't have a wheel in our wheelhouse. It was very cozy and we came year round every Friday night. I say night because the trip from upriver was so far that we often didn't get to the house before 11pm. Since we were making a fetish of the naked car, in the summertime we did not fool with a dinghy (a dinghy left unsupervised around here is a goner) and swam to and from where we anchored the whaleboat.

Some nights it would be absolutely pitch dark when we got to the anchorage. I had two little bicycle reflectors lined up, one on a stake on the beach and one on a piling of the house so I could figure out exactly where to drop the anchor (big, 50# Luke/Herreshoff fisherman). You know, pitch dark is not an unusual thing to us. There used to be plenty of places around here far enough from town lights that it would be as dark as the natural sky would let it be. On a moonless night, it was literally impossible to see your hand in front of your face if there was enough overcast so the little illumination of the stars was shaded out. On a clear night you could see the Milky Way arching across the sky clear from the distant tree line of the mainland to the east all the way to the horizon way to the west.

I don't know what it is with a Floridian but they sure do love to leave the lights on. Maybe they are scared somebody will steal their batteries. Anyway, that darkness is fast becoming a thing of the past. On an overcast dark night over here, now not only are the security lights of paranoid fools visible, not only on the mainland but over on the island, too, but you can easily see the loom of Tallahassee reflected on the clouds. Pretty soon "dark" will be an imaginary word.

So, the whaleboat days were an adventure. We hauled our stuff in these plastic boxes which are the boon of boat people (and lots of others) and pulled them along behind us as we swam in from the anchorage on our backs. We tried not to think about sharks and things as we swam in what we hoped was the

right direction in the pitch dark. We were very glad to open the house and finally eat our supper and go to bed in our cozy little outfit. I wonder if any of these new people with the big fancy plywood, flakeboard, and vinyl siding monstrosities enjoy their arrival as much?

One time we were fixing to go on an adventure in the whaleboat early in the morning so we dog paddled out carrying our fishing rods and pushing our icebox. As soon as we got close to the whaleboat a bunch of grown mullet swam from it to us. At first I thought they were something else and might be dangerous but then I realized that they were just mullet and started to relax, but then they got all between our legs like they were trying to hide from something. We began to feel a little edgy and got to feeling real edgy when great, big, huge bluefish came running from the whaleboat and started biting those big (18") mullet half in two all around us.

The water instantly turned bloody and an oil slick from the fat in the mullet formed 50' wide. Jane and I made the last 20' to the whaleboat pretty quick and I believe we hold the world's record for climbing up the high sides of one of those estimable vessels. After that we started to bring a skiff for a dinghy and it wasn't long before it dawned on us that a skiff was all we needed. It simplified things a lot. Like I've said before, a big boat is a real pain in the ass.

I almost concluded this epistle before I told you the story about how we came to know the exact size of those bluefish that were biting those big mullet half in two amongst us. The day before we were fishing on the seaside in this truly tiny boat we kept in the house especially for that purpose. It was barely big enough to hold us and always took at least two or three tries to paddle out through the surf.

We were dedicated hook and line fishermen then and we did what we had to do even if we capsized and swamped five times in the surf. So we were out there early in the morning fishing in that thing when Jane hooked something big on a live pinfish on a hook with a wire leader. We didn't know what it was and the only thing that kept it from taking all her line was that the boat was so little he could tow us with less effort than it took to break the line. And that is exactly what he did. The big fish resolutely towed us to the east against the longshore current for so long that the sea breeze made up and the surf did, too.

Jane is a possessive type of person and not apt to let something she owns get away from her if she can help it (she will fool around trying to fix old tore up worthless junk way longer than is practical for one thing... things like Dollar Store reading glasses) so she held on. Finally she wore this big fish down so she could get close enough to see him. We didn't know bluefish got that big and, looking straight down on him like that, we couldn't tell what he was but it was a moot point. We did not have a gaff or a landing net or anything. Nevertheless, Jane was not willing to listen to reason and let her fish go so the only thing we could think of to do was to try to land him on the beach through the surf.

Naturally she drew him up as close as possible so she could supervise his activities as we tried to surf in and, naturally, we capsized and all washed up in a wad, boat, us, fishing tackle... and that damned dangerous

bluefish tried to bite us half in two but Jane clipped him in the ribs so hard that his lips flapped and punted him up on the sand and we took him home and tried to eat him. He was too big to bake so we cut him up and smoked him. He was alright, I guess. I don't actually remember. I do remember that those 29" bluefish were a scourge all summer long. We couldn't catch anything else. They even ate up all the crabs.

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We'd sailed from the Mersey into a turbulent Liverpool Bay, racing against a fast moving ebb to get around the Great Ormes Head before running out of water. My friend Rick and I, aboard my 30' steel cutter, *Coot*, were bound for the Menai Straits, between Wales and the Island of Anglesey. The weather had been deteriorating throughout the day and now, close to sunset and with a cold rain beginning, we were happy to drop anchor just off a favorite pub, the 18th century *Gazelle*. We were looking forward to a warm fire, a pint or two of the *Gazelle's* good bitter, and rack of lamb.

At the bar we met a couple in their 70s, he might have been 80. Being in our 40s, they seemed definitely old. They'd just come down from Greenock in Scotland, a long way up the boisterous Irish Sea, he in their 20' Kingfisher, the little twin-keeler anchored just downstream from us, and she in the car. He'd sailed across to Downpatrick on the Irish coast, over to the Isle of Man, and on to Liverpool, anchoring in the Straits yesterday. He was off for Holyhead tomorrow and over to Dublin before heading back to Scotland.

The couple had sailed together until about ten years ago when her arthritis and a "gammy" leg made the physical demands of cruising the Irish Sea too much. Now she followed along in their little Mini with an extra mainsail, a box of tools and spares, waders (to trudge through the mud when the Kingfisher took the ground), a picnic basket, and a huge Clumber spaniel who now lay at their feet. She tried to arrive before her husband, ready to take his lines or, more often than not, help him land the dinghy before sharing the recent adventure over a sandwich and a pint.

They might spend a night or two on the boat or find a room, as they had at the *Gazelle*, for a hot bath and a good rest before setting off on the next leg. They enjoyed cruising the way they did and I don't think I've ever met two happier sailors.

The will to sail and to keep sailing is as unequally assigned as physical fitness and, for some of us, even as the gathering infirmities line up, each anxious for its turn, the pleasures of cruising in a small sailboat are difficult to abandon. Now in my 70s I sail and cruise a little differently than I did ten or 15 years ago, more simply to be sure, and with greater appreciation. With luck, old age happens gradually.

How do you know when you're not as young as you used to be? In my case, I think it was when I began to rely more and more upon my wife to spot numbers on buoys or to pick the right headland out of two or three possibilities, especially in misty weather. Then Beth began to have similar difficulties seeing details, things were becoming a bit fuzzier for each of us. An eye examination found cataracts. I had mine removed and now my vision is better than it's been in years. Would that other infirmities responded as well to modern medicine.

Then there is Scout, our Brittany, who has his own age demons. He hates sailing and everything that goes with it except his friend the dinghy that takes him to shore three or four times a day, fair weather or foul. There came a day when all that became a chore and the next summer we reluctantly booked old Scout into a kennel. I think we're all a bit happier now but I'm not sure.

At some point I began to carry a boat cushion forward to kneel on to haul chain

Senior Sailing

By Richard Alan Smith

and crank the anchor windlass. Knees are troublesome with me and I've learned to treat them kindly. For similar reasons, we sit on cockpit seat cushions that relieve the discomfort of hard seats. During our extended summer cruises we've come to enjoy sailing in tandem with friends for a week or so at a time, all of us, young or old, compensating in one way or another for physical or emotional impediments to pure waterborne bliss. For a variety of reason we often make different passages to our shared anchorages, sailing or motoring at speeds consistent with our and our boats' abilities. We dig clams or not and walk dogs in a new appreciation of the more leisured cruising that can be easily overlooked during younger, hurried, and more complicated lives. With time, the boat becomes more a means to the end rather than the end itself.

Cruising in a variety of boats and in a number of waters, I seem to have had fewer mishaps and accidents as I've gotten older. It may be that we senior sailors find advantage in moving about more slowly and carefully on both land and sea. With time, I've also become more comfortable with unexpected events and am a more agreeable companion to those with whom I sail.

Along with experience comes the benefit of knowing more about your boat and her moods and quirks. I know better when and where to spend money and when not to and what things are more important than others. Holding on to the same boat for a number of years allows for a rapport and familiarity that the excitement of moving up to a larger and seemingly better boat doesn't always improve upon. So does having a boat whose designed characteristics tend to match your cruising area and general usage.

A heavy displacement auxiliary or competitive racer may be entirely suitable to younger, larger, and more athletic crews who make easy work of heavier ground tackle, multiple sail changes, and spinnaker handling in rough seas. Strong men and women can usually prevail against difficult circumstances, but as one grows older the joys of sailing may come in other packages. My steel cutter, ideally suited to heaving-to in the Irish Sea and the prospect of an ocean crossing to the Pacific is, in my view, not the best boat for summer sailing in Puget Sound which invites a lighter, close-winded, and more easily handled sloop with fewer lines to manage and lighter ground tackle.

As much as anyone I admire the appearance of a fine yacht drawn mightily through the water by a spinnaker and I mean no disrespect when I say I would rather look at billowing headsails than seek the benefits they bring. I have used a "cruising chute" with little effect as it seemed to allow such a narrow angle on or off the wind. Even my roller furled 150% genoa lives much of the time now in the quarterberth waiting for a good Pacific High to bring settled weather. Worse yet, I confess to sailing downwind with just the working jib more than I would have done a few years ago, especially when sailing alone.

For some time, I thought the day would dawn when I would switch to a motor sailor, then the comfort and convenience of a trawler yacht of some sort, maybe even a fine

pulling boat. I was almost persuaded last summer that electronic charts had now made sailing much simpler and that my old paper charts were obsolete, even dangerous. A good case was also made for automatic steering and an electric windlass. I didn't have to be reminded that there are times when two-speed, self-tailing winches would come in handy. But somehow we've come to spend the three or four thousand dollar upgrade on other things. When I think of such hedges against old age, I look off to windward and the thought seems to pass, at least so far. It's nice to know, however, that should I need such things, and more, they are there.

With retirement comes additional time to enjoy life afloat. Instead of the last two weeks in August, we take two months and cruise more in June and September. It's not just an increase in available time but the inclination to take advantage of more local knowledge, the cozy wood stove, and our newfound pleasure in bird watching.

My cruising ground in Puget Sound is studded with innumerable floating logs and deadheads, kelp beds, crab traps, and other similar perils. For these and other reasons, we don't sail at night or move about dodging patchy early morning fog. Lying at anchor is a good time to check over the engine, chase down that leak in the head, and re-arrange the foci's storage.

Lately I find myself looking forward to a day or two of murkiness and drizzle as a good excuse to read in front of the woodstove, bake a loaf of bread, or make kelp pickles. Waiting for the right wind and tide can also mean more sailing with less fuel. Even if one doesn't find the cost of running an engine very important, consider the fumes wafting back into the cockpit. Knowing how to occupy oneself in harbor happily and constructively is good seamanship.

Since buying my present boat ten years ago, I've removed the formerly high tech Combi (wind, depth, and speed in one instrument) that worked only occasionally and the rusting hot water heater in the engine compartment that threatened to come adrift each time we tacked. I took out the pressure water system and shower, too. I also removed the dodger that spoiled views of the horizon, increased windage, and ruined the boat's lovely profile. There is also a little less weight up high. Summers in the Pacific Northwest are not as wet as they are sometimes made out to be. On the days when it does rain, we tend to stay in port and rig a small boom tent to shelter the open companionway.

Recently I traced some extremely difficult-to-find overhead leaks to pilot holes for the screws holding down the companionway slide garage some call a sea-hood. Once found, I removed the thing and filled the holes. I can find no reason to re-fit it.

When my diesel heat system went on the blink, I found I didn't miss the thing one bit and traded it, ducts, vents, exhaust, and all to a cruising friend for a Dickinson bulkhead fireplace and we're both happy.

Earlier I had thought that before I added something, I'd remove something. That seemed sensible, but now that I've gotten the hang of it, I'm not sure where it all will end. Recently I've been eyeing the charcoal barbecue, an old and steady shipmate. It's got a hole in its grate that should be seen to and it does look a little incongruous sitting up there on the push pit next to the horseshoe buoy.

Beyond the matter of just what is a fitting and proper amount of electronic aids to navigation, the drive to find happiness in a plethora of accessories, however satisfying, is not in itself at the core of sailing and the enjoyment of boats. And for many of us who have enjoyed doing without all the comforts of home in our sailboats, the fewer things we have to take care of and worry about, the better. Simplicity is sensible and a friend of old sailors.

It is perhaps well to end this harangue with a tribute to the dinghy. This is not an entirely practical matter, but one close to many a sailor's heart, young or old. As we cruise into new or familiar waters it is important to maintain something of the feeling that propelled us into the world of boats in the first place. For me, the little dinghy, trailing along behind, is a constant reminder of those

more innocent times. Our pram is not without its weak points. An inflatable is certainly a more stable and forgiving boarding platform and, with an engine, quicker to get to shore and more fun for the grandchildren who, after the age of three, show fatal signs of indifference to the slow moving pleasures of life on the water.

We sailed with an inflatable for years and I cannot fault it convincingly. It was not a lot of fun to row and even though we lost it to a colony of barnacles, I remember it with great fondness. But our dinghy, home made, wooden, and fast under oars gives us good exercise and we like to look at it. Apart from the GPS (I am not a total Luddite) it is the best indicator of the big boat's speed and winter wouldn't be the same without messing about with this or that new bailing can, a new method of securing the oars, or touching up

the varnish here and there in a warm workshop. The pride I take in having built her has outlasted many other pleasures and I can find little on the water that gives such unadulterated and simple pleasure while asking so little in return.

It may be that one day the big boat's anchor and chain, dug in after a windy night and difficult to lift, will be a bit more than good exercise. Rampaging about these short and choppy inland seas dodging floating logs, container ships, and cruise liners might get ahead of this sailor's cunning, and haul-out expenses may finally claim more than their rightful share of our beleaguered budget. But when I look back and see that dinghy, all frothy and ready to take old Scout to the beach for a good look 'round, I know that all's well, that we must have been doing something right all these years.

I don't remember the exact date, but it was sometime in the early '70s that my wife Beverly, my 11-year-old son Chris, and I thought it would be a good idea to take time off from my business (restaurant) and spend some time in Cuttyhunk. Cuttyhunk is the westernmost of the Elizabeth Islands, north of Martha's Vineyard, and is at the entrance to Buzzards Bay just west of Massachusetts' Cape Cod. My 1959 29' Pacemaker was docked at Cowesett Marina in Warwick, Rhode Island.

We left the marina on a Sunday morning, planning to spend four days in Cuttyhunk and return on a Wednesday since I had to be back to my restaurant on Thursday to prepare the fish for Friday. We traveled the 32 miles (including Narragansett Bay) to Cuttyhunk Pond on a beautiful sunny day without incident. After spending four beautiful days of relaxation, it was time to return home (remember, I had to prepare the fish for Friday).

First I checked the weather on radio and it was blowing 45 knots outside the harbor (first red flag). Strangely enough, it was flat calm inside. I decided we had to go because, after all, I had to prepare the fish for Friday. After hauling anchor, I ran the boat over to the dock and was told they had no gas. The gas barge would be there on Thursday (second red flag). After checking the chart, I saw that Westport on the mainland was only about ten miles away. We would get gas there.

Five Red Flags

(I must have been out of my mind)

By Armand Boucher

I raised the windshield for better visibility. After laying the chart in front of me, I charged out of the entrance to the pond. The wind quickly made a kite out of the chart and it was gone (third red flag). Fortunately, we had a chart book. The information provided said that boats should not attempt to enter Westport harbor in strong southerly winds (fourth red flag). We managed to enter the harbor at full throttle and ran the boat over to the gas dock.

After filling the tanks, I bent over to check them with the gas stick. I felt a sharp pain in my lower back and could barely stand (fifth red flag). At this point I should have called the marine operator and made contact with my number one bartender who was also a cook and well able to prepare the fish for Friday. The sensible thing to do would have been to anchor in Westport harbor until morning. But no, I had to be back to (guess what) prepare the fish for Friday.

The going was difficult. We took the seas on the port quarter and lost the windshield wipers which meant raising the windshield and getting wet. I was not accustomed to running a boat while seated, especially in

rough weather. I liked to stand so I could feel the movement of the boat under my feet. However, my back hurt so bad that sitting was my only choice.

As we passed Sakonnet Point I thought it would be safer for us to forget Newport and enter the Sakonnet River. This would save a few miles of running in open ocean. After waiting for the right wave we were able to surf in with no problem. My back was getting worse so I asked Beverly to take the wheel (she had never done it). I went below and stayed flat on my back. My son Chris was an excellent navigator. Between the two of us we were able to direct Beverly through the Sakonnet, into Mount Hope Bay, to Narragansett Bay, to Greenwich Bay and finally to the marina.

At this point, in spite of the pain, I had to run the boat into the slip. As Beverly and Chris tied up and unloaded the gear, I made my way to the car. When we arrived home I could not get out of the car. My wife drove me to the hospital! Six weeks later I was able to return to work.

Did I learn anything? Let's see. I endangered the lives of my wife, my son, and myself, I injured my back, and neglected my business for six weeks. Yes, I learned something. Don't wait for five red flags. Pay attention to the very first. By the way, my business ran just fine without me.

I am now 75 years old and my son is 42. Beverly and I sail a 14.2 Capri between hospital stays of one kind or another.

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My wife of 27 years and I recently attended a beautiful wedding for our very special niece in Maui, Hawaii. This much needed retreat and several days in paradise made this a most treasured trip. Upon our arrival we heard on the local news that an "International Festival of Canoes" was taking place over the next two weeks. As an avid wooden boat enthusiast, I couldn't resist... could I?

The "International Festival of Canoes" is a celebration of native heritage and preservation of skills from long ago. Hawaii was originally settled by Polynesian peoples before the European adventurers discovered this chain of islands. The Polynesians had sailed for 1,000 years to the chain of islands in log sailing canoes traveling 1,500-3,000 miles over the open Pacific Ocean. Once they settled in Hawaii, they no longer had need for long distance sailing canoes. They evolved to the paddling style canoe which they used for transport of goods, people, and confrontations amongst the islands.

Wooden Boat Building Polynesian Style

By Ric Altfather

This two-week event starts out with whole trees harvested from a neighboring island, shipped to Maui and positioned under a single Banyan tree that covers the entire workshop of at least 10,000sf. The event was a re-creation of native sailing and paddling canoe craftsmanship.

The participating artisans represented the islands of Maori, Cook Island, Tonga, Tahiti, Marshall Island, Palaua, and Hawaii. The carvers displayed their own unique canoe designs based on the desired purpose of their respective island cultures. Also present was the Maui High School, a Hawaiian "Hale" (lodge) maker, model carvers, and

wooden surfboard shapers.

The "new" canoe builders used modern implements, chain saws, routers, planers, power sanders, and drills but some still used the adze and axe. The challenge was to fashion a complete canoe in two weeks. How many of us have taken months/years to complete our boats? Each participant was sponsored by a local hotel/resort. Upon completion each canoe is ceremoniously carried to the beach, launched, and paddled to the respective sponsor for permanent display at its facility.

We met artisans who want to preserve the ancient crafts, carvers who have crossed the Pacific many times, students who want to learn their forefathers' art, carvers for kings, and true artists. We visited the event several days to view the progress from tree to canoe which was an incredible display, but unfortunately missed the final launch due to our regular scheduled duties on the mainland... sounds like a good excuse to go back and see what we missed?



The Apprenticeshop

A Center for Traditional Maritime
Craftsmanship Since 1972

Apprenticeshop Launches Three

By Trisha Badger

On July 9th, first and second year apprentices Nick Carlson of Balsam Lake, Wisconsin; Tito Parodi of Genoa, Italy; Sara Forristall of Newburyport, Massachusetts; and Martin Feracci of Gif sur Yvette, France, launched an 18' double ender designed by Murray Peterson. This boat was commissioned by Sterling Williamson of Portsmouth, Virginia, and he had this to say about the 'Old Gaffer,' "I'm blown away... from what I've seen, the 'Shop has indeed exceeded my expectations. I look forward to getting up to Rockland and sailing that most beautiful work of art." Mr. Williamson has named his double ender *My Ol' Man*.

On July 16th, about 100 members of the Rockland, Maine, community gathered at Atlantic Challenge's waterfront facility to see two new-builds launched from the ways; a 24' lobsterboat designed by lead instructor Kevin Carney, and an 18' Moosabec Reach Boat.

The Moosabec Reach Boat, built by second year apprentice Kate Tanski of Bar Harbor, Maine, and first year apprentice Rick Ramenda of Newington, Connecticut, was commissioned by Atlantic Challenge trustee Frank Blair of Chicago, Illinois. The Reach Boat will be used as a ship's tender for his schooner, the *Maggie B*, which will cruise international waters.

The 24' lobsterboat was built by first and second year apprentices Andrew Nencheck of Califon, New Jersey; Eric Stockinger of Dearborn, Michigan; Phineas Ramsey of Sacramento, California; Lisa Zygowski of Caledonia, Ontario, Canada; and Todd Kosakowski of Poughkeepsie, New York. The crew began construction in September of 2004. It is the third Carney-24 built at the Apprenticeshop following a 22-footer built in 2001. This newly launched cedar plank over oak frame boat is currently for sale.

The Apprenticeshop is a traditional wooden boatbuilding school that has been teaching traditional boatbuilding techniques to local and international apprentices since 1972. The program is unique because seamanship is an integral part of the experiential learning process. Atlantic Challenge believes that for an apprentice to realize the greatest understanding of boat building, he or she must also become a confident mariner. Through the use of boats, students learn the subtleties of construction that might otherwise go unnoticed.

For further information about Apprenticeshop and other AC programs, call (207) 594-1800 or visit our website at www.atlanticchallenge.com <<http://www.atlanticchallenge.com/>>

Murray Peterson 18' double ender on the Atlantic Challenge ways.



Builders Kate Tanski, Rick Ramenda, and supporters carry the Moosabec to the ways prior to launch.



Kate Tanski and Rick Ramenda aboard the Moosabec Reach Boat just after launch.



Lobsterboat and crew prepare to launch.

The Lobsterboat crew celebrates after splashing.



There is no such thing as a perfect boat. That's why a person needs several. One for floating down the river, one for fly fishing, one for overnight sailing trips, one for day sailing, and so on. Non-boat people just don't seem to understand that.

I had a pretty good day sailer, a Bolger Common Sense Skiff. For some day sailing applications it might be considered an almost perfect day sailer, but for me it was just too complicated. It had a kick-up rudder that must be fastened down with a bungee or, as Bolger suggests, a sacrificial peg. It has a solent lug rig with a heavy yard that I hoist with the halyard. To reef it I have to drop the whole sail and retie the halyard to a different point on the yard. On the plus side is the fact that the C.S. Skiff is a fast sailer. It can plane on a reach. It also is a real pleasure to row.

The water in front of my cottage is shallow with a mud/stone bottom. There is an island about 300 yards off shore and the wind generally blows off my beach toward the island. It was really a challenge to get the rudder and centerboard down and sail up before hitting the island. The water is cold and the Common Sense Skiff will capsize if you are not attentive. I needed a simpler and more stable day sailer, maybe a bit bigger, too.

I parked the C.S. Skiff at my friend's farm and tried to sell her. It is a really nice boat but I had no offers. I couldn't face the idea of the thing sitting at the farm, unused and uncared for, so I gave it to the Girl Scouts. They have a very active sailing program and were glad to get it.

My friend, Tom Cole, understood my boat needs, having been to our cottage and having sailed the C.S. Skiff. He suggested the Mayfly 16, a design by Jim Michalak. I was a bit dubious of any non-Bolger design. I have built six of his boats and they all performed well. However, I couldn't find a Bolger design that really fit my needs. The Japanese Beach Cruiser seemed the closest fit but was maybe a bit too heavy. I figured I

Building the Michalak Mayfly 16

By George Fulk

might as well take the leap into the void and try something new. I am glad I did.

Building my Mayfly 16, which was the prototype of the design, was pretty simple except for the leeboard. If you are a beginning boatbuilder, you should read Payson's *Building Instant Boats*, or Michalak's *Boat Building for Beginners and Beyond* to get good accounts about how to build these simple plywood boats. A few things that I thought were noteworthy about building the Mayfly 16 follow.

The sides of this boat are quite high, making rowing difficult. The design calls for oar ports but I don't think they would work out very well and I did not put them in. Having to pass the oars through a hole in the side of the boat before I can row or get the oars out could really be awkward. Also, the leeboard would have to be partly lowered to allow me to row, not a good thing if I were rowing up to the shore.

Having a hole in the side of the boat is a potential capsize hazard unless I built a door of some sort to cover the hole. That would require still another thing to deal with in order to get ready to row.

Instead of oar ports, I decided to use longer oars, 7'6" instead of 7'. The oars are supposed to be stowed under the seats which run along the side and are 7' long between two bulkheads. I built a 7" deep, open-faced box at the bottom of the aft bulkhead to provide extra space to stow the longer oars. I can get the oars under the seat but not without a little effort. I can row the boat with these oars, but the boat does not row especially easily. I rowed it for a mile without too much difficulty the other day when the wind dropped to zero.

The leeboard caused me some problems. It pivots on a lower bearing which is a hefty piece attached to one side above the water line. The upper bearing attaches to the gunwale and has a slot in which the leeboard slides. Getting a good fit between the side of the boat and the lower bearing took some time. The lower bearing bolts into framing which supports the seats. This framing runs along the inner surface of each side. In order to get it to bend enough to fit I had to laminate two 1/2" pieces together. Even then the framing seemed too skimpy to hold the heavy lower lee board bearing so I added a couple of 2"x2"s that run from the bottom up to the gunwale.

When I installed the seat framing I was not fully aware of how important they were to the location of the leeboard. The leeboard ended up about 2" too low, so when the board is up its lower edge was below the bottom of the boat. That would cause the leeboard to grind on my stony beach. In order to raise the leeboard I added a block of wood to the top of the lower bearing and drilled a new hole for the pivot. That caused another problem, the upper edge of the leeboard hit the after end of upper bearing so the board could not be fully raised. I think the design needs a longer and narrower board. I solved the problem by taking a 1"x3" notch out of the after edge of the board. Not too elegant, but it works.

This boat has several nice features. The balanced lug rig is easy to set up and easy to reef. The load on the sheet is very light since part of the sail sets forward of the mast. The seating is really comfortable and spacious, plenty of room for three adults. The storage compartments fore and aft of the cockpit are roomy and provide a lot of flotation in case of a knockdown. I can sail with a small motor on the transom or stow the motor in the forward compartment. The leeboard swings up easily by pulling on a line, or I can just let it bump the bottom and it will come up on its own. I got a breakaway jam cleat from Duckworks. This cleat holds a line keeping the leeboard down. A lot of pressure on the line, such as might be caused by the leeboard hitting something, causes the jam cleat to open. The rudder blade also swings up on its own when I come ashore. The blade is held down by a lead weight built into its lower end.

My first sail in this boat was with the designer, Jim Michalak. We did not have his GPS but we figured it sailed between three and four knots in a seven to ten knot breeze. "Just like all boats of this size," he said. I know that this boat is extremely easy to handle and very comfortable to ride in. It seems to point into the wind about as well as the C.S. Skiff, based on how quickly I can tack into our small cove which always seems to be directly into the wind on returning.

This boat is a pretty good motorboat, too. It is not a planing hull so I guess it moves rather slowly by most motorboat standards. Still, I can get to good fishing areas quite easily with my 4hp motor.

I have the boat on a mooring off my beach. The mooring has a pulley on it. There is another pulley fastened to a stake on the beach. A double line runs between the two pulleys and allows me to pull the boat in and out. This makes for a nice arrangement for a quick sail. I am planning some overnight camping trips which will give me a better idea of this boat's capabilities.

Launch Day.





Finished leeboard.

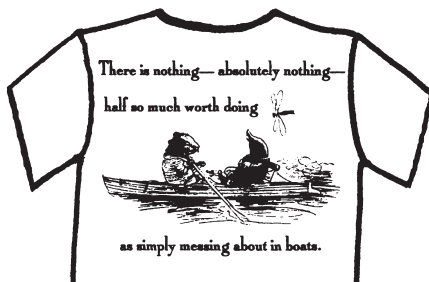


Aft bulkhead with slots for oars.

Old Salt and kick up rudder.



Just add water.




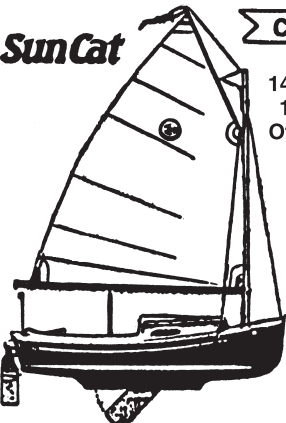
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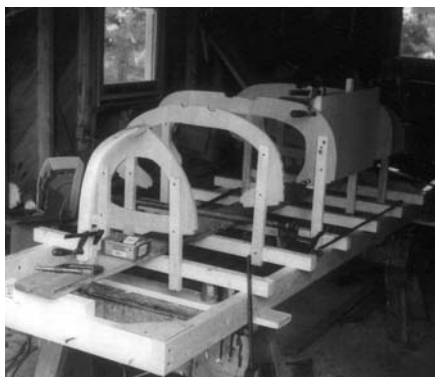
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Steam bent transom.



Steam bent stem



Molds in place.

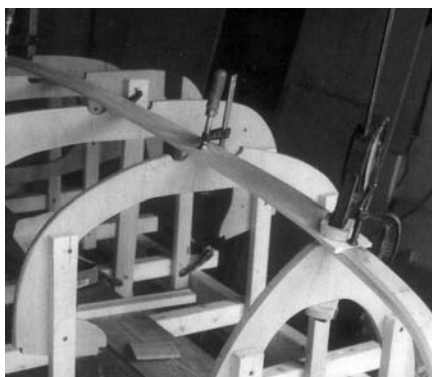
Deck and coaming in place



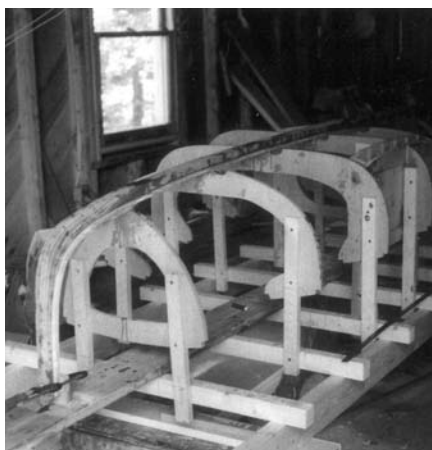
Building a Strip Plank Version of Bolger's Queen Mab

By R. Hadden

Here is a short photo essay of my building of a strip planked version of Phil Bolger's Queen Mab design. Phil had asked to be kept abreast of progress. I hope to finish her up, launch, and sail before the season is over. The project would not have been possible for me without a nail gun.



Keel apron in place



Stem cap, shoe and skeg in place



Strips (1/4"x1/4" cedar) glued and nailed.



Off molds, void filled with micro balloons.



Deck going on.

Finished hull with one coat of glass courtesy of Greene Marine.



In our first installment we worked on the basic chip shaped like a little pyramid, and on the star. As I mentioned in the first article, the star is a great basic design which you actually can use in a number of applications.

But if you are sick of popping perfect little chips and symmetrical stars, you are ready for the compass rose. But first a reminder about safety. The chips can move very fast. One in the eye can create an urgent need for a trip to the emergency ward. Use safety glasses.

After you have your safety glasses on, remember to secure your work so it doesn't slip. Carpet underlayment (or the stuff they sell as draw liner) works well for light work. A small clamp is also handy for this. A device called a "carver's hook" can be devised with a piece of pine plank (say 8-1/2"x 6"). To the plank you attach two narrow runners of wood, one on the top on the far side from you and one on the bottom (your near side). The hook, the carpet underlayment, and a small clamp allow you to safely carve almost anywhere you can find a flat surface. I have several of these made up for specific jobs I carve frequently. I set them up with runners designed to hold small or oddly-shaped pieces.

Your success in any carving project depends on the sharpness of your knife edge. Dull knives tear while sharp knives cut cleanly. The effort of dragging a dull knife through the wood is more likely to create a slip and consequently an accident in the work or to your hand. If you are uncertain about how to obtain the sharpest edge, the chip carving knife is a great place to learn.

Here's a fast guide to telling if your knife is sharp. Turn your knife edge up in a well lit area. Look down on the edge. Tip the edge from side to side as you look down on it. The edge of a really sharp blade will not reflect. If your knife has dull areas along the edge they'll show up as white areas. In a really dull knife this will be a white line. More likely your knife will show specks and areas of white which need sharpening. Lay your knife flat on your sharpening stone (a fine ceramic stone is what I prefer), raise the back of the knife no more than the thickness of a dime, and pull the knife away from the edge. Try ten strokes like this, then do the other side the same way. Check the edge for the white line and repeat as needed. A wire edge can form and break off if your blade needs that much work. After sharpening avoid testing the edge on your thumb. Take a piece of wood and trim the end grain with your knife edge. A good sharp edge should cleanly pare the end grain in either pine or cherry.

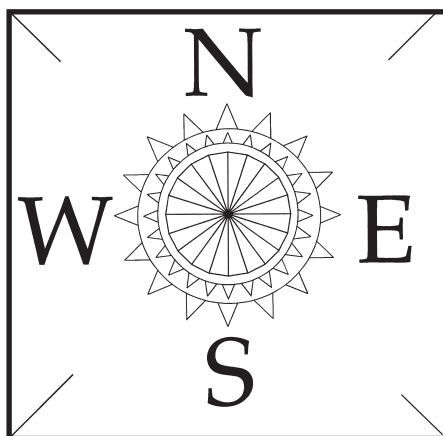
Use an actual dime if you must until you get the angle right. If the blade is at too high an angle you eventually create a wedge-shaped edge. If you look at the edge of your knife you'll see that it's rather thin in profile and slips through the wood when sharp.

One of the supply houses has at least seven pages of sharpening equipment. You can buy everything from expensive self contained sharpening systems to single stones. I have an assortment of equipment for sharpening: stones, strops, felt wheels, ceramic hones, and lapping compounds. My friend, Bill Bromell, depends his old oil stone and puts my efforts to shame. Moral of the story, dollars spent is much less important than knowledge applied.

The compass rose is more complex but not much harder than the star. Start by draw-

Chip Carving II

By Louis N. Carreras



ing in the entire design with graphite transfer paper. Use dotted lines for the vertical cuts between the rays. If you skip this step you'll get confused in the middle of cutting the design and wind up cutting a vertical where an angle cut goes or vice versa. The rosette is a series of rays standing up between long valleys; the chips you remove.

You will need to reposition your work periodically as the direction of your knife cuts change. There is no such thing as only carving with the grain. This is why securing your work properly is so important.

The little pyramids around the edges of the design are so small that you need not do vertical cuts in the center but just remove them with three careful angle cuts. Keep your knife very sharp or those simple chips will confound you by refusing to pop out or by leaving rough facets behind.

The challenging part of the compass rose is the central rosette. For this design I advise first cutting the semicircular outside of the rays first. They'll act as stop cuts if your knife slips and make removing the chips easier. Now you are ready to make the first of the vertical cuts. There are ten of these. If you cut them all right up to the point where they all meet the wood, at the vertex will be weak and will break. The trick here is to approach the meet point but stay a bit shy of it so the wood at that point retains some support.

After making a vertical cut, moving from the center out towards the edge, cut the two chips on either side of it with slicing cuts. You'll find that much of the work of cutting these slanted cuts will be accomplished with the movement of the wrist as it flexes during the cut.

You will now have a pie shaped wedge, the first of ten making up the rosette. This first series of cuts sets up your pattern for cutting the rest of the cuts. The order of cutting can be clockwise or counter clockwise around the rosettes, but don't skip around. If you leave off and return later or, as happens in my shop, wind up talking to one of your kids, you'll make a wrong cut and ruin the whole thing.

The letters for the directions are made with simple V cuts done one side at a time. After carving the rosette they're easy. A caution on carving letters, the curved areas of

letters like O, C or U offer a bit of a challenge. At the beginnings and ends of the curves there will be a grain change requiring you to reverse the direction of your cut. If you don't you may find that the knife overcuts the design because it wants to follow the grain. On this design you shouldn't have a problem, but if you enlarge the lettering I advise cutting a centerline first and watching for areas where your direction of cut will change.

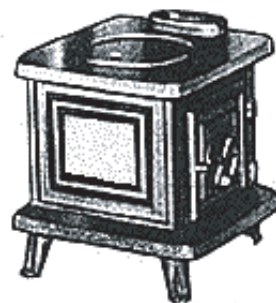
The design here is my own inspired by 18th and 19th century examples. You're welcome to use it for noncommercial use or design your own from the many examples around.

If you've mastered the chip carved compass rose with the letters and are interested in more carving, I'd advise any of Wayne Barton's books on chip carving. If you then decide that quarterboards and eagles are in your future, take a look at Jay Hanna's *The Shipcarver's Handbook*. Depending on where you are in the country there are a number of places which offer woodcarving courses. A couple of days learning in a group encourages creativity and corrects bad habits before they become ingrained. I teach at Woodenboat School in Maine and Lowell's Boat Shop in Massachusetts, but I know that other fine teachers offer courses at other boatbuilding schools and museums. Inquire.

Anyone interested in checking out my work can either visit my booth at the Maine Boatbuilders Show or visit the homepage I've put up for my students to visit: <http://homepage.mac.com/loucarreras/PhotoAlbum1.html>. There's an email link at the homepage if you wish to contact me.

(Louis N. Carreras is proprietor of The Woodcarver's Knot Marine Carving, P.O. Box 1054, Shirley, MA 01464, (978) 466-8631)

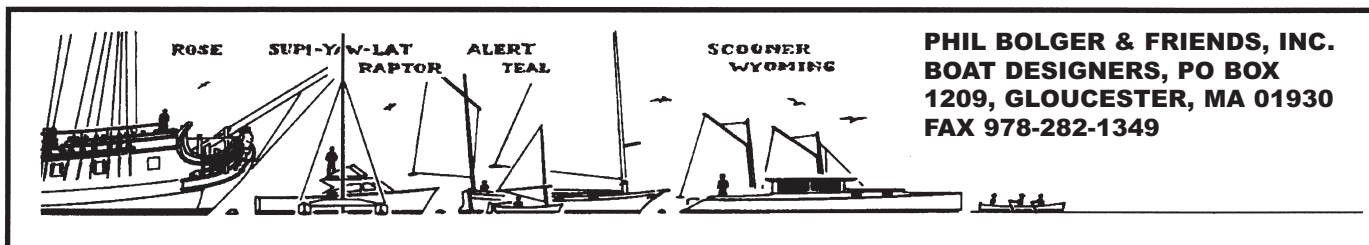
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Ten or 12 years after the commercially successful, but not very interesting, yacht tender discussed in the last issue, another commission to about the same wish list came in. It amounted to a need for maximum carrying capacity on a small footprint on deck or in a dinghy park with reasonably good manners when towed at large sailboat speeds, as dry as possible in a small chop or a motorboat wake. This one added some sailing capability. The Canadian builder was willing to use a split mold; that is, the hull did not have to be shaped to be extracted from a complete female mold. Also, coring techniques had become familiar that allowed large flat surfaces to be built up sandwich fashion of thin glass and thicker foam to be stiff without being very heavy, and incidentally to add some useful positive buoyancy.

I suggested a shape reminiscent of the big sloops that used to haul granite blocks from the quarries hereabouts to Boston, a box for the hold, rounded off at each end just as bluntly as seemed possible if it was to steer reliably. Rounding in the ends made it possible to step anywhere in the boat and have the boat stand up to the weight on the theory that most dinghy capsizes come from putting weight in the bow without anything aft to hold her down, and that the water in most swappings gets in over the corners of the stern when somebody leans out to clear the propeller of an outboard motor, for instance. Displacement on 100mm (4") draft is 149 kilos or 328 pounds and it builds up fast as she's loaded deeper as her wide ends get down into the water. The reason for choosing a shape like this over something prettier and more boatlike is that any fining up just means that it will float deeper with any given load, building up drag and more quickly reaching the danger point.

Bolger on Design

Puffin Another Yacht Tender Design #291 2.3m x 1.08m (7'6"x3'6")

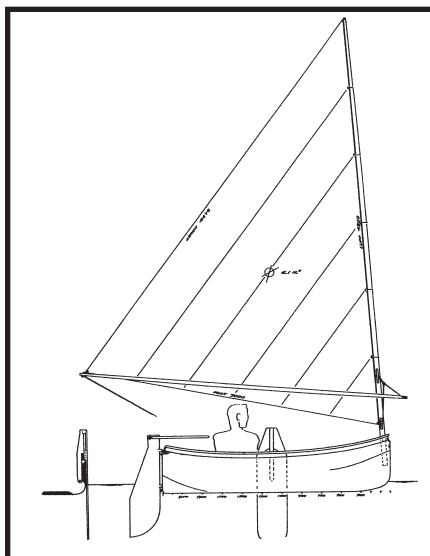
I used the clip-on single leeboard on quite a few small boats. They're simple to build and save space. They don't have to be switched over in tacking, as far as I could ever see they work as well on the weather side as the lee. The fixed-blade deep rudder is not a good idea, among other reasons

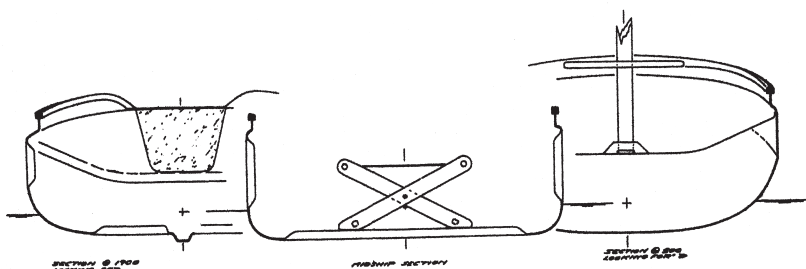
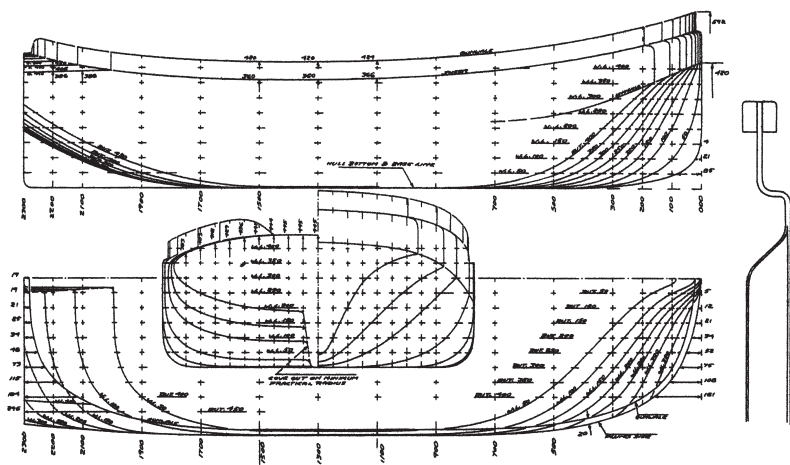
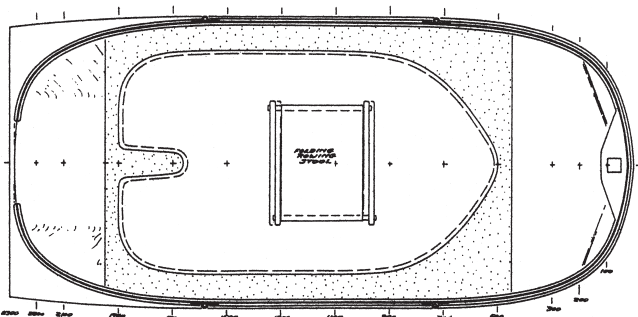
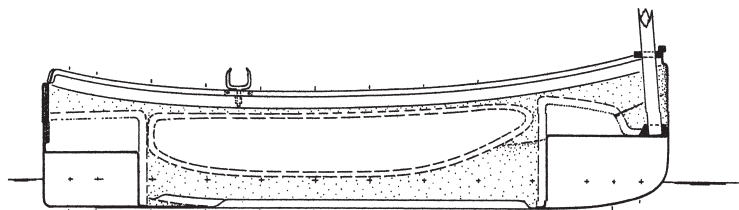
because there's no control getting on and off a beach (the rationale at the time was that it's best to do beach work under oars, but it's then a nasty business getting the rudder shipped after getting clear of the shore). A shallow rudder with an end plate would have been appropriate, but the fat skeg would have had to be slimmed down. Hanging a rudder on a skeg, or keel, which has a square trailing face much thicker than the rudder, is a certain formula for maddeningly unsteady steering as the rudder is enveloped in aimless eddies and has to be swung to a big angle before it has any steering effect.

The mold plug for this boat was built using strip planking for the dead flat mid-body with the sculpted ends built up bread-and-butter and carved out like a model boat. The builders took great pains with the finish and followed the plans exactly to the last detail. They were a small operation and only promoted the class locally, but I did get one letter from an owner praising the boat (that's one more than the earlier design elicited); it was mailed from the Galapagos Islands so he'd had time to form a judgement. The praise was mainly for its steadiness underfoot, but respectable sailing performance was mentioned.

The shape certainly looked distinctive, whether the reasoning that led to it is approved or not. Every line of it can be explained and defended by function. This would not be a sensible proposition for one-off building and what I wrote about the earlier dinghy, that a simple box boat does the same job practically as well, holds for this one. However, if somebody is interested in putting this design back into production, we'd be interested in discussing it.

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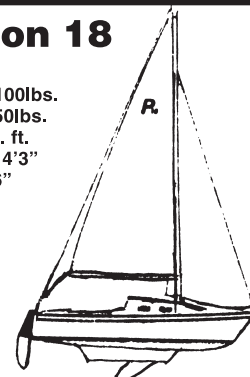


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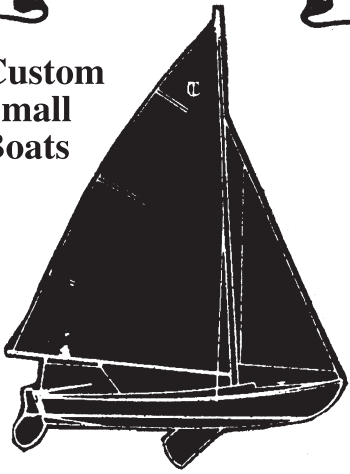


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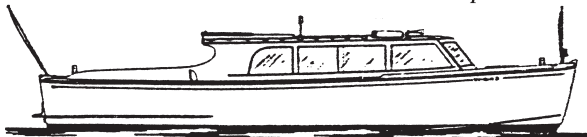


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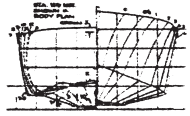
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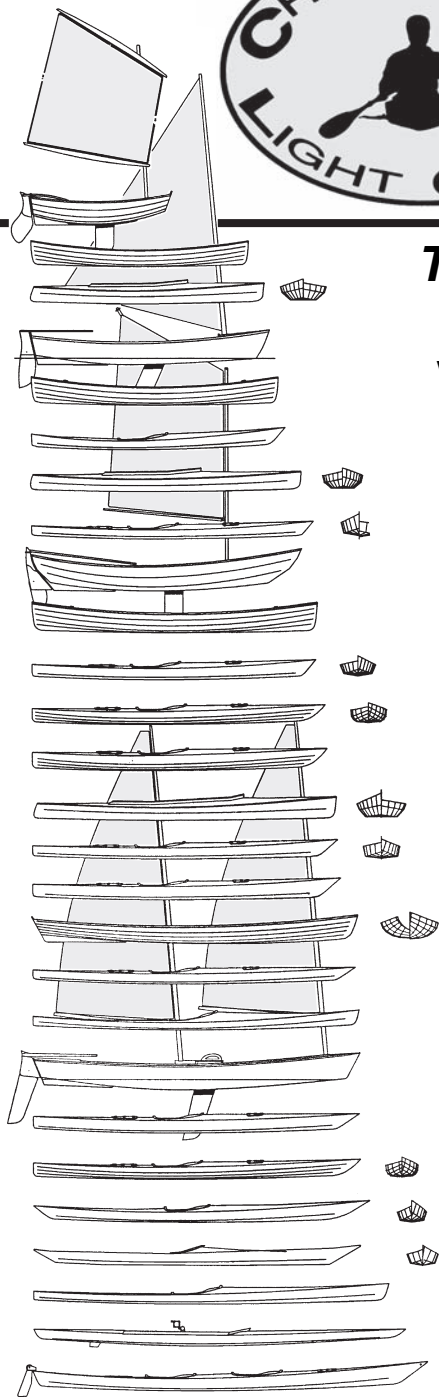
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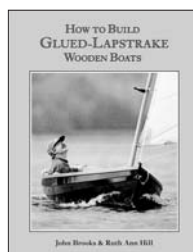


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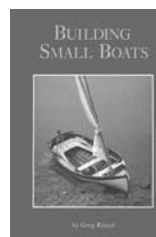
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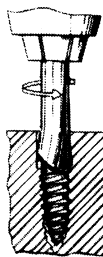
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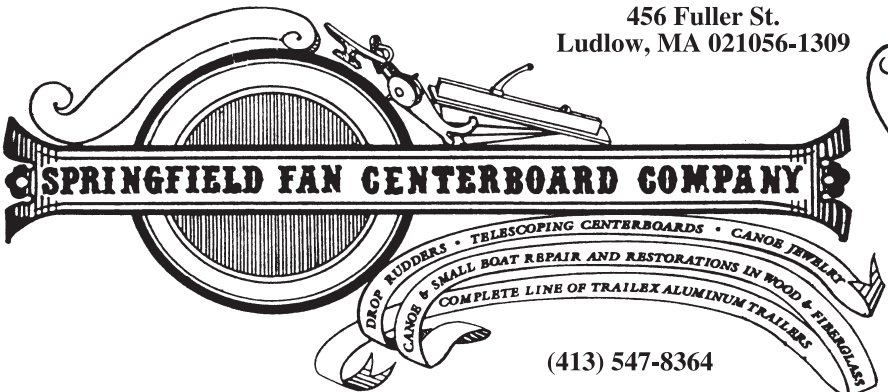
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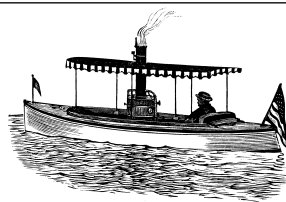
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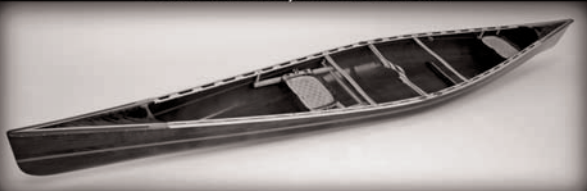
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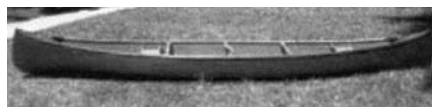


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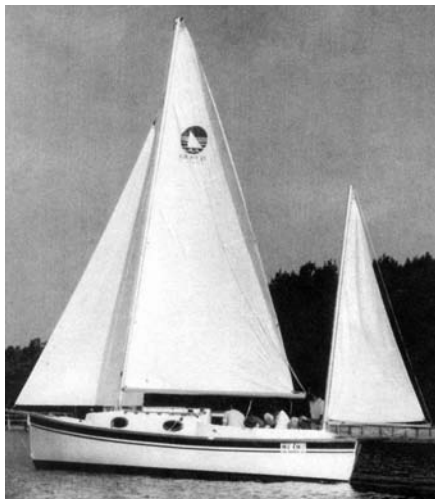
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'97 Peep Hen 14, micro cruiser catboat w/cabin, 14'2"x6'4". Sail away (drive away) package w/all options & lots of spare gear. Crab Cake II is fg, has box keel w/cb, draws 9" board up & 3" board down, self bailing, self righting, total weight 650lbs w/200lbs ballast. Dark green hull w/buff/cream topsides. Cabin has 4" of headroom, sleeps 2 adults; 1 berth is 6'6". Galley flat, sink, & storage. Cockpit larger w/deeper coamings than many 20' boats. 115sf, gaff rigged, tanbark, Dacron sail w/jiffy reefing & 2 sets reef points. All lines led aft for single handing w/Harken blocks, also tiller tamer extension. Never have to leave the cockpit to handle boat. Aluminum spars, freestanding mast w/mast tabernacle. Options & extras such as bimini & cockpit summer cabin, interior cushions cockpit cushions. Covers for sail, tiller, bimini, & motor. Teak finished in Sikkens Cetol, handrails, companionway door, boom/mast galls, & cockpit seat. Origo ss alcohol stove, icebox, never used portapotti, brass ventilator, screen companion insert, new uninstalled brass solar vent, & stainless swim ladder. Safety equipment, portable vhf, pfd's, fenders, bilge pump, storage containers, & even boat hook. Bruce anchor, chain & long nylon rode in self-bailing anchor well. Motor '02 Mercury 5hp 4-stroke used once, external 3gal gas tank, you break it in the way you want. Tilt trlr '97 Performance, galv, w/4.80x12 tires, bearing buddies, spare tire, set up for 1-7/8" ball, ready to effortlessly roll cross country behind any vehicle. USCG 2004 vessel safety check. Exc cond fresh water boat has only seen salt once. Can be launched, rigged, sail raised, & ready to cast off in 10 minutes single handed. This is truly a trailerable boat that can sail 4 adults comfortably. Might consider partial trade for sailing dingy. Located in Lewes, DE. Motivated seller, \$8,495,
ROB MAJEWSKI, Lewes, DE, (302) 644-4612, robert.majewski@comcast.net, <mail to:robert.majewski@comcast.net> (10)

BOATS WANTED

Small Rowboat, aprox 10'-13', any builder. Vintage boat preferred, must be all bright, inside & out to satisfy a customer's request.
BOYD'S BOATYARD, Canton, CT, (860) 693-4811 (9)

SAILS & RIGGING FOR SALE

Long Micro Sails, 42sf mizzen, 221sf main, tanbark, Hood, 8 seasons, reasonable.
BOB HOLDEN, RI, (401) 821-0914 (9)

SAILS & RIGGING WANTED

Sail Rig, for Sea Eagle SE-8 inflatable boat.
NEIL FOLSOM, Standish, ME, (207) 787-3448, <moslof@psouth.net> (9)

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Forward Facing Rowing, convert your row-boat to forward facing rowing with EZ-ROW. Uses existing oarlock pins & a clamp which af-fixes rowing system to the gunwales of your boat.
FORWARD FACING ROWING, (651) 465-6608, www.ez-row.com

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DOC CASS, Wellington, ME, (207) 683-2435 (10)

Low Profile Floating Dock, 21 modules & connectors. Details at www.jetfloat.com/jetflash/jet-spec1.html. New cost \$1,100. Selling for \$500 firm.
TOM HUNTER, Port Huron, MI, (810) 982-2721 (10)



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3,800lbs Iron ballast, from 32' P.L. Rhodes sloop. Lines & offsets available. Fair & reasonable price if you can build from it. DAVE DURGIN, Duxbury, MA, (781) 585-4991 (9)

BOOKS & PLANS FOR SALE

Rozinante Plans, May '61 issue of *Rudder* magazine, with complete building plans for L.F. Herreshoff's Rozinante canoe yawl. \$20, postpaid TOM FULK, Anacortes, WA, (360) 293-8368 (10)

Boating Magazines: *MAIB*, 130 issues \$50 + shipping. Canoe catalogs, 4 *Small Boat* magazines, *Sailing & MotorBoat* magazines, *Rudder* magazine, 10 *Multihulls* magazines. R. DOWNES, Mashpee, MA, (508) 539-3944 (10)



Egret 17' Skin-on-frame Kayak, easy to build; many covering options. Plans, patterns, detailed instructions \$55. SASE for more info: ROSS MILLER BOAT DESIGN, P.O. Box 256 West Mystic CT 06388 (15P)



Dory Plans, row, power & sail. 30 designs 8'-30'. Send \$3 for study packet. DOWN EAST DORIES, Dept. MB, Pleasant Beach Rd., S. Thomaston, ME 04858 (TF)



P.J. Roar, a 15' marine ply sliding-seat sculling boat. Compl plans incl sliding seat assembly & full-size frames. Hull 59lbs, rigging 17lbs. Car-topable 100% by one person. Plans \$30. Extensive construction manual \$10. JOHN NICHOLSON YACHT DESIGN LLC, Alexandria, VA, (703) 946-4635 <http://www.jnicholson.net> (13P)



Li'l Beauty, a 35lb touring kayak, can be built w/only \$85 in materials in either 12' or 14' lengths, in 2 short wknds! Being a boat camper I've often slept in comfort in the 7' cockpit, in my sleeping bag! Construction manual has color photos & full-size templates for only \$20ppd. check payable to Walter Head. HOBBYCRAFT KAYAKS, 1178 Laurel Fork Rd. Vilas, NC 28692 (TFP)

Robb White & Sons Sport Boat, handy, pretty, proven 16' x 43" strip planked skiff. Will plane with 2 adults with 4hp. Full sized mold patterns, complete instructions. \$75. SASE for photos & specs. ROBB WHITE & SONS, Box 561, Thomasville, GA 31799 (TFP)



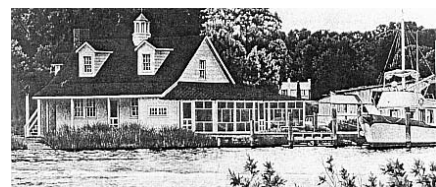
Nutmeg (aka \$200 Sailboat), Bolger design, 15'6"x4'6". Plans w/compl directions. \$20. DAVE CARNELL, 322 Pages Creek Dr., Wilmington, NC 28411, <davecarnell@ec.rr.com>

Build the Sea Shell Pram, inexpensive, with plans, materials list & photos. \$45. EDWARD A. GEORGE, P.O. Box 329, Charlestown, RI 02813 (13P)

BOAT PLANS & KITS - WWW.GLEN-L.COM: Customer photos, FREE how-to information, online catalog. Or send \$9.95 for 216-PAGE DESIGN BOOK, includes FREE Supplies catalog. Over 240 proven designs, 7'-55'. "How To Use Epoxy" manual \$2.00. GLEN-L, Box 1804MA44, 9152 Rosecrans, Bellflower, CA 90707-1804, (562) 630-6258, www.Glen-L.com (TFP)

"Sleeper", 7'10" car topable sailing cruiser. Slps 2 below deck. Plans \$37, info \$3. EPOCH PRESS, 186 Almonte Blvd., Mill Valley, CA 94941 (TFP)

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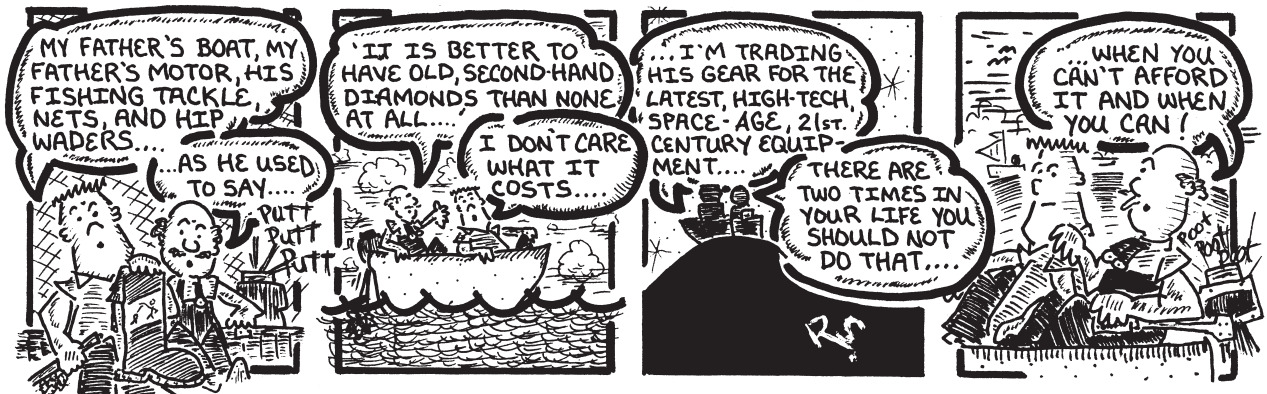
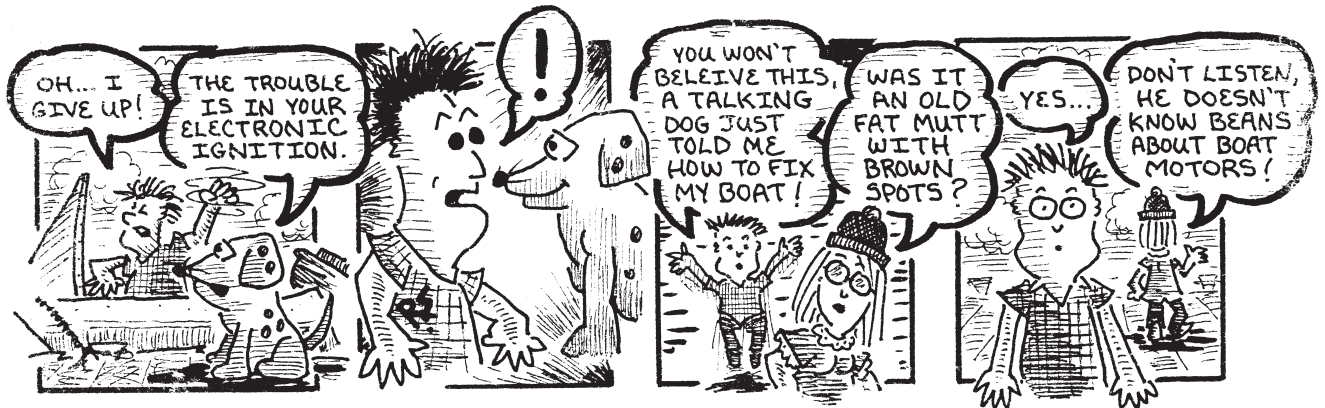
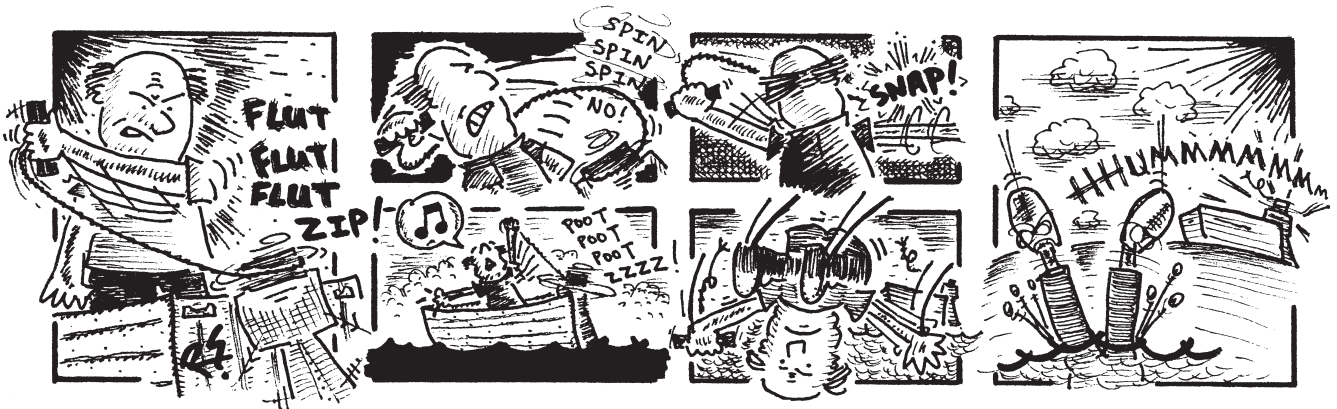
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The photo above was taken by Bob Hicks during the Blackburn Challenge. The going was easy in this portion of the race. Competitors later encountered 6-ft seas. The chair of the race committee, Tom Lawler, later said, "We are ashamed we let that race go on. If we ever have conditions like that again, we are going to cancel the race."

Paul Neil, the man at the oars, has won his class in the Blackburn eight times in a row....something never done by any other competitor in any boat.

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May 28-30 Woodstock Craftshow, New Paltz, NY
June 18-20 No Octane Regatta, Blue Mtn Lake, NY
June 19-20 Clearwater Festival, Croton, NY
July 16-7 Lake Champlain Maritime Museum, VT
July 29-31 Stowe Arts Festival, Stowe, VT
July 30-1 Antique & Classic, Skaneateles, NY
Aug 5-7 Champlain Valley Folk Festival, Ferrisburg, VT
Aug 5-7 Hildene Crafts Festival, Manchester, VT
Aug 5-7 Antique & Classic Clayton NY
Aug 12-4 Art & Crafts Festival, Lake Placid, NY
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